

THE ARKANSAS POST STORY

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by

Roger E. Coleman

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Santa Fe, New Mexico

1987

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INTRODUCTION

Arkansas Post National Memorial commemorates nearly three-hundred years of European occupation in the Arkansas and lower Mississippi valleys. The trading house, fort, and civilian hamlet--known collectively as Arkansas Post--has been a strategic military and commercial center as well as the focal point of numerous encounters between Indians and Europeans.

Occupied by France, Spain, the United States, and the Confederacy during the Civil War, Arkansas Post has figured prominently in the politics of four nations and contributed significantly to the history of North America. As the first European settlement in the lower Mississippi valley, Arkansas Post helped establish the claim of France to the most important waterway on the continent. Under French ownership, Arkansas Post served as a center of Indian policy; as a port for Mississippi River convoys; and as a point of embarkation to trade and hunt on the upper Arkansas River. Adventuresome French explorers eventually reached Santa Fe and established the Arkansas River as one transportation link to the Spanish southwest. Under the jurisdiction of Spain, Arkansas Post bolstered the Spanish barrier and helped prevent English penetration to Spanish colonies in the southwest. During the American Revolution, Spain aided the patriots and Arkansas Post served as an intelligence center and stopping point for American supply boats. Controlled by the United States, Arkansas Post became a bustling frontier town; a center of cotton production; a thriving river port; and the first capital for the Territory of Arkansas. Arkansas Post enjoyed a new prosperity interrupted only by the Civil War. For the first few months of the conflict, a Confederate earthwork at Arkansas Post guarded the approach to the upriver capital of Little Rock. In January, 1863, Arkansas Post fell to Federal troops following a three-day engagement.

The story of Arkansas Post is the story of the river that flowed past it. Over 1,450 miles long, the Arkansas River was a major transportation artery. Originating deep within the heart of Spanish territory, the Arkansas pulsed through the dominions of numerous native American cultures, and eventually emptied into the great Mississippi River. Located at the confluence of both rivers, Arkansas Post served as a point of entry for trappers and traders bound for the upper Arkansas. On the return journey, this riparian highway carried the rich harvest of pelts to New Orleans and markets abroad. Following the purchase of

Louisiana by the United States, the Arkansas River became one avenue of westward expansion. Immigrants in search of cheap land populated the Arkansas floodplain, and the river that once served the Indian trade helped feed the cotton hungry textile mills of the east. Ironically, the river that attracted Europeans to its banks often destroyed their crops, homes, and forts. Almost annually the temperamental Arkansas became a raging torrent, spilled over its banks and consumed the land for miles around. No location within thirty miles of the mouth of the river remained dry. To escape the omnipresent threat of inundation, the flood weary inhabitants of Arkansas Post changed location several times. No less than seven different posts have existed in the lower Arkansas valley.

Numerous difficulties were encountered in this undertaking. Chief among these were deficiencies in the historical record. Documents provided only a brief and incomplete glimpse into the remote history of Arkansas Post. Key events were often poorly detailed. At other times, the historical record identified its participants by a single name as is evident in many of the characterizations herein. Names nearly always reflected a variety of misspellings making it necessary to hypothesize continuity between people and places. Lastly, the various locations and movements of Arkansas Post have troubled researchers for years. Fortunately for the present study, recent historical and archeological analyses have resolved this issue.

Three colleagues in the National Park Service have contributed significantly to The Arkansas Post Story. For tirelessly critiquing earlier manuscripts, the writer gratefully acknowledges the assistance of Edwin C. Bearss, Chief Historian, Washington D.C.; of Melody Webb, Chief Historian, Southwest Regional Office, Santa Fe; and of Gregorio S.A. Carrera, Historian at Arkansas Post National Memorial, Gillette, Arkansas. A special thanks is extended To Eastern National Parks and Monument Association for funding this project.

CHAPTER 1

FRENCH COLONIZATION AND ARKANSAS POST

By the mid-seventeenth century, European powers controlled substantial portions of North America. France occupied the St. Lawrence valley, Acadia and the Great Lakes region. England claimed much of the Atlantic Seaboard and Spain ruled what is now the southwestern and southeastern United States including the Gulf of Mexico. All three governments had designs on the vast unsettled interior of the continent. Although Spain extended a claim to this region by Hernando de Soto's expedition, she made no attempt at colonization. English explorers began to venture west of the Alleghanies and in 1673, two Virginians reached the Cherokees on the upper Tennessee River. Eager to compete with Spain and England for control of the great interior, the French government sponsored an expedition to this region in 1673.

Two capable men were chosen to undertake the expedition: Jacques Marquette, a Jesuit missionary, and Louis Joliet, a fur trader. On May 17 1673, Marquette, Joliet, and four other men departed Michilimackinack in two bark canoes. The tiny flotilla traversed Green Bay and the Fox River, portaged to the Wisconsin River, and, one month after initiating their journey, entered the "Great Father of Waters" described by Indians.

On March 15, 1674, Marquette and Joliet landed their bark canoes at the Quapaw Indian village of Kappa. The Quapaw were bewildered and perhaps frightened at the sight of these white-faced, bearded strangers--the first Europeans to come among them. To indicate his good intentions, Marquette smoked the calumet, the traditional pipe of peace, with tribal leaders.¹

The Quapaw numbered about 2,500 individuals residing in four towns. Kappa and Tongigua were situated on the Mississippi River north of the mouth of the Arkansas River. Tourima and Osotouy were farther inland on the banks of the Arkansas River. Marquette and later travelers described the Quapaw as "strong, well made" and attractive in appearance, and dubbed them the beaux hommes or handsome men. The French found the Quapaw quite unlike northern Indians and characterized them as "civil, liberal, and of a gay humor."²

The Quapaw regaled their guests with two days of dancing and feasting. The Frenchmen learned from their hosts that the Mississippi River entered the Gulf of Mexico scarcely 10-days journey from Kappa. Fearing detection by



Figure 1. Sauvage du Nord Ouest de la Louisiane. An unsigned, 1741 engraving. The Indian is probably a Quapaw warrior. He holds a scalp in one hand and a snake totem in the other.



DRAWN BY HARRY FENN.

BARK HOUSES.

casting the old standards aside, I began ten fires were often seen in perspective

Figure 2. Bark houses. The Quapaw lived in dwellings like these. The Century Magazine, Dec. 1895.

the Spanish, however, the explorers did not follow the river to its mouth. Before departing the Quapaw, Marquette erected a great cross in their village as a symbol of friendship. Four months later the explorers brought news of their discoveries to Canada.

The Marquette-Joliet expedition fostered dreams of an all-water route between the Great Lakes and the Gulf of Mexico. One energetic visionary in particular, Robert Cavalier Sieur de La Salle, developed an ambitious scheme to establish a chain of trading posts along the Mississippi from the lake country to the mouth of the river.³

La Salle was born in the city of Rouen, France, in 1643, to a wealthy burgher. At the age of 23 the young La Salle decided to seek his fortunes in the new world. In 1666, he traveled to the island of Montreal and obtained a seignury or land grant. La Salle settled down to the life of a farmer, occasionally trading with the Indians. Stories of the great interior region related to La Salle by the Indians kindled his adventuresome spirit and awakened a desire for exploration. La Salle spent the next several years trading in the Ohio valley where he gained a thorough knowledge of the wilderness. When the young trader learned of Marquette's discovery of the Mississippi, he developed plans to establish a trading empire in the great interior. La Salle envisioned a chain of posts stretching from the lake country to the Gulf of Mexico. Each post would be operated by a trader. Furs obtained by the trader could be shipped upriver to Quebec or downriver to a town La Salle hoped to establish on the gulf coast. Of course, La Salle planned to reap a sizeable personal fortune for his efforts.⁴

In 1675, La Salle ventured to France to obtain the favor of the royal court for his plan. The influential young Norman managed to obtain a monopoly over the entire fur trade of the interior, the first step toward implementing his grand scheme. The following four years were spent in Canada making additional preparations. In 1678, La Salle was again in France to seek financial backing for his undertaking. While there he met Henri de Tonti, a personable young man recently discharged from the French army.

Henri de Tonti was born in Paris, in 1650. His Italian father had fled Naples with his family after taking part in an unsuccessful insurrection. De Tonti entered the French army at the age of 18, losing his right hand in the explosion of a grenade. The severed member was replaced with a metal hand that he disguised with a glove. Among the Indians, De Tonti's metal hand earned him a reputation as



Figure 3. Henri de Tonti, known to the Indians as "Tonti of the Iron Hand." Illinois State Historical Library.

the possessor of powerful magic. Sometimes the willful explorer used it with great effect against rebellious Indians; for this he was widely known as "Tonti of the Iron Hand." De Tonti proved to be a fearless and loyal lieutenant to La Salle. Of De Tonti, La Salle remarked that "his energy and address make him equal to anything."⁵

In 1679, La Salle and his capable lieutenant succeeded in making alliances with the Illinois tribes and began construction of trading posts on the upper Illinois River. Iroquois incursions into the Illinois country, however, temporarily interrupted their mission. The English instigated attacks by this eastern confederacy of Indian tribes in the belief that they could force the Illinois to trade with England instead of France. The Iroquois totally demoralized the poorly organized Illinois Indians. In one raid, the eastern aggressors slaughtered or captured more than twelve-hundred members of one Illinois tribe. More than six-hundred were burned at the stake, and their roasted flesh consumed. Raids continued, and the Illinois abandoned their homeland, scattering westward for safety. Finally by 1681, La Salle succeeded in gathering many of these Indians together as a united front against the Iroquois. In August of that year, the explorer resumed his mission, leading an expedition down the Mississippi to discover the mouth of the great river.⁶

In March 1682, La Salle and his voyageurs arrived among the Quapaw Indians. Nearing the village of Kappa, the Frenchmen detected the faint, ominous beat of drums. Uncertain of the reception they would receive, the party crossed to the east side of the Mississippi and made camp. La Salle dispatched two Frenchmen to proceed to the village to act as hostages in declaration of his peaceable intentions. A few hours later, a delegation of Quapaw chiefs crossed the river, presenting the calumet or ceremonial pipe to La Salle. Now assured of the safety of his men, the cautious leader guided the party to the opposite shore. According to De Tonti, the Quapaw "regaled us with the best they had." The explorers received the same reception at Tongigua and Tourima. With the relationship between France and the Quapaw tribe thus reconfirmed, La Salle erected "the arms of the king" at Kappa and the voyageurs resumed their mission to discover the mouth of the Mississippi River.⁷

One month after leaving the Quapaw, the party reached the Gulf of Mexico. La Salle ceremoniously erected the "arms of the King," and claimed the entire Mississippi valley for France, calling it Louisiana in honor of the French monarch Louis XIV.



Figure 4. La Salle exploring the Mississippi River.



Figure 5. La Salle among the Quapaw at the mouth of the Arkansas River.

While ascending the Mississippi, the Frenchmen stopped once again among the Quapaw. La Salle granted to De Tonti, a large tract of land on the Arkansas River, the first land grant made in Louisiana. Apparently, La Salle foresaw the potential of the Arkansas area both for trade with the friendly Quapaw and as a stopping point for Mississippi River convoys. Someday, envisioned the explorer, the convoys would carry his furs to the gulf coast.

It appeared that La Salle's vision of a trading empire would soon be realized; only a town at the mouth of the Mississippi was needed. In 1683, La Salle returned to France to gather colonists and supplies for his projected town. In August of the following year the explorer departed France with two-hundred colonists in four ships bound for the Gulf of Mexico. Unfortunately for the expedition, the hapless fleet overlooked the mouth of the Mississippi during a violent storm. Because of an argument between the fleet captain and La Salle, the colonists were put ashore at Matagorda Bay, in present-day Texas. Seemingly undaunted by this setback, the intrepid explorer constructed a fort from which to explore the surrounding country and search for the Mississippi.

Problems plagued the ill-fated expedition from the start. Already responsible for a critical error in judgment that stranded his colony deep within Spanish territory, La Salle showed hesitancy and vacillation at critical moments. The leader alienated his men by his haughty bearing and lack of sympathy. In one particular instance, La Salle led a scouting party along the seacoast in search of the Mississippi River. Two brothers--remembered only by their surname, Langtot--accompanied the expedition. When the younger Langtot lagged behind the procession, La Salle angrily rebuffed the man, and ordered him to return forthwith to camp. As he retraced his steps, alone, the helpless Langtot was murdered by Indians. Blaming La Salle for the incident, the elder Langtot "vowed to God that he would never forgive his brothers death."⁸ This incident proved to be La Salle's undoing.

In January, while on another scouting mission, Langtot avenged his brothers death. With several partisans he had enlisted to his cause, Langtot volunteered to venture ahead of the main party in search of three overdue hunters. La Salle granted the request. Langtot soon found the missing hunters who had stopped to dry the meat of a buffalo they had killed. Since dusk approached, the group made camp. Langtot convinced the three hunters, whom he knew were loyal to La Salle, to take the first watch. After fulfilling their responsibility, all three men were murdered in their sleep. As dawn approached, the camp was aroused by the

sound of shots, a signal that La Salle approached. Langtot and his mutinous cutthroats scattered to the woods and encircled the camp. The unsuspecting La Salle walked directly into their midst. Spying only a servant, La Salle asked the man of the whereabouts of the others. A tense silence greeted the request. Suddenly, the forest exploded with the sharp report of pistols. La Salle "received three balls in his head" and slumped to the ground.⁹ Thus ended the life and ambitions of Robert Cavalier Sieur de La Salle. Months later when De Tonti learned of the murder, he characterized his former captain as "a man of wonderful ability and capable of undertaking any discovery."¹⁰ The Matagorda Bay colony dissolved. One group abandoned the fort and undertook the long trek to Canada. Those who remained met death at the hands of the Indians or became captives of the Spaniards.

During the time that La Salle attempted to establish a colony at the mouth of the Mississippi, De Tonti remained in the Illinois country to look after affairs there. In 1686, De Tonti learned that La Salle was somewhere on the gulf coast and set out to find his leader. A search party led by De Tonti reached the mouth of the Mississippi in April. Following an extensive but fruitless search, De Tonti abandoned his effort to find La Salle. Retracing their steps, the searchers stopped at the seignury or land grant on the Arkansas River given to De Tonti by La Salle four years earlier. Ten of the voyageurs accompanying De Tonti requested permission to remain on the seignury and open a trading post among the Quapaw. Fortunes in peltries could be amassed here by an enterprising trader. De Tonti granted the request to six of his men, placing them under the leadership of Coutoure Charpenter. The remainder returned with De Tonti to Illinois to procure supplies and trade goods for the venture.¹¹

Charpenter and the five remaining Frenchmen set about constructing the trading post. As a suitable location, a small promineny scarcely "half a musket shot" from the Quapaw village of Osotouy was selected. This promised to be a suitable site for the post because of its proximity to prime beaver country about eighteen miles above the mouth of the Arkansas River. Charpenter's men erected a house after the "French fashion." The structure was a small cabin of horizontal "cedar" logs joined at the corners by "swallow-tail" notches. The roof was covered with bark.¹²

De Tonti planned to develop this post and turn it into a permanent French settlement. Realizing the importance of a mission to the growth of his seignury, De Tonti deeded to Father Dablon, superior of the Canadian missions, two tracts of land for missions to serve the French and Indians. The

resident missionary would be expected to share his time ministering among the French and Quapaw. De Tonti somewhat presumptuously styled himself "Seignor [sic.] of the City of Tonti and of the river of Arkansas." The clergy never took advantage of his generous offer, and the "City of Tonti" was never more than a tiny trading post in a trackless wilderness.¹³

In July 1687, several survivors of La Salle's ill-fated Matagorda Bay colony stumbled upon De Tonti's post. This group, led by Henri Joutel, had separated from La Salle's assassins and begun the grueling journey to Canada. After nearly six months of wandering through the wilderness, Joutel and the other survivors stood on the bank of the Arkansas River. To their joy, a great wooden cross and a French house were on the opposite side. The tattered travelers "knelt down, lifting up . . . hands and eyes to heaven" and gave thanks to God for their salvation.¹⁴

The traders at De Tonti's post were no less overjoyed to find other Frenchmen in these remote quarters. Spying Joutel's party, already being escorted across the river by some Quapaw Indians, two Frenchmen rushed out of the post and in their excitement fired a salute with their muskets. Joutel wrote that they "had almost as much need of our help as we of theirs since they had neither powder nor shot nor anything else."¹⁵ Trade items for the Quapaw had been slow in coming, and four of the six men whom De Tonti had left on the Arkansas, had returned to the Illinois country. The remaining men, Coutoure Carpenter and one known only as De Launey, lacked trade items to pacify the Indians and were in a vulnerable position.

Following the excitement of their arrival, Joutel's party recuperated at the post for several days. To alleviate the problems of their hosts, the refugees provided Carpenter and De Launey with their remaining trade goods including 16 pounds of powder, 800 balls, 300 flints, 26 knives, 10 axes, and 2 to 3 pounds of beads. Exchanging their horses to the Indians for canoes, Joutel and his men resumed their journey. As an additional service, Joutel transported a small bundle of beaver pelts that the traders had managed to purchase from the Quapaw. A Parisian referred to as Bartholomew, being "none the ablest of body," was left at the post to recover.¹⁶

Joutel's party reached the Illinois country and informed De Tonti of La Salle's murder. Having learned of the mutiny, De Tonti organized a second expedition to search for remaining survivors of the Matagorda Bay colony. Only seven days march from the Spaniards, however, De Tonti's voyageurs would search no further. Disgusted with the lot,

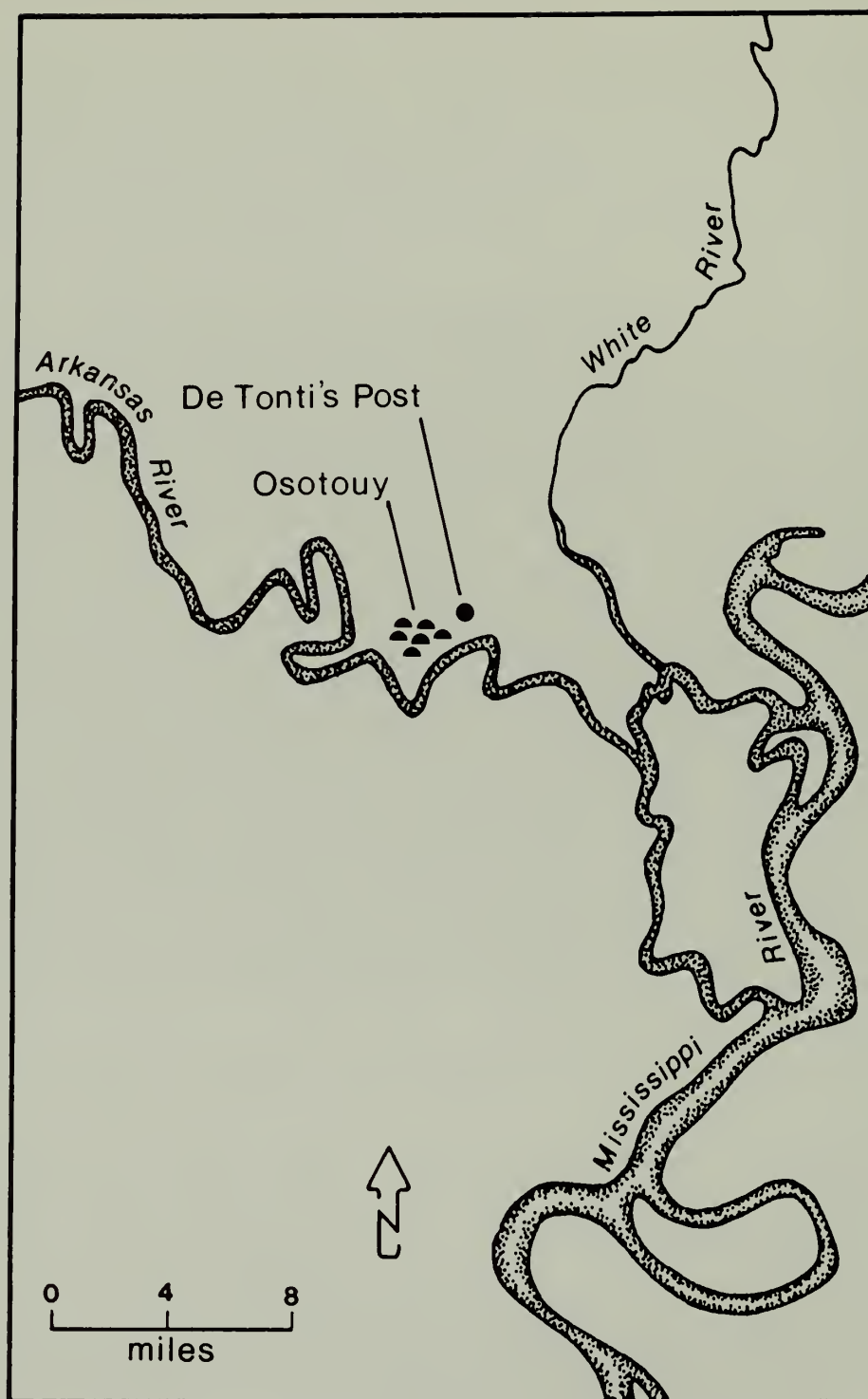


Figure 6. The location of Arkansas Post from 1686-1698. Henri de Tonti established a trading house on the Arkansas River to trade with the Quapaw Indians.

he described them as "unmanageable persons over whom I could exercise no authority." De Tonti was forced to abandon his search.¹⁷

While among the Quapaw, De Tonti visited his "commercial house" for the first time. To reach the post, the explorer found it necessary to navigate 18 miles up the Arkansas around numerous sandbars and through swift currents. The inconvenience of reaching the post was evident. During his next visit eight years later, De Tonti had the season's beaver catch delivered to him at the mouth of the Arkansas.¹⁸

The trading establishment on the Arkansas River was doomed to failure. For many years, there had been difficulty in marketing beaver in Europe. Such a large surplus of pelts had accumulated that the French monarch placed a moratorium on beaver trade south of Canada and ordered all voyageurs to return to Quebec. These restrictions led to misfortune in De Tonti's trading ventures. In 1698, De Tonti traveled to the Arkansas under government service to enforce the royal edict and evict all French hunters and traders. This action probably led to the desertion of Coutoure Charpenter, trader at De Tonti's Post.

Charpenter joined the English in the Carolinas where trade was unrestricted. In 1700, the renegade Frenchman guided a party of Englishmen to the mouth of the Arkansas to trade with the Quapaw. The attempt was foiled, largely because of the timely intervention of Pierre Charles le Seurer, a French explorer. Le Seurer informed the interlopers of the claim of France to the region.

Because of the depressed economy and English overtures to control the Louisiana fur trade, the French government relied on missionaries to preserve goodwill and maintain alliances with the Indians. In 1698, De Tonti guided several Jesuits downriver to locate sites for missions. Two years later, a Jesuit, Father Nicholas Focault, decided to live among the Quapaw.

The first Arkansas mission was short-lived. Father Focault's contemporaries believed him too infirm to be a missionary. Predictably, the priest's efforts among the Quapaw met with little success. Greatly discouraged, Focault abandoned the mission after one year. The priest bargained with some Coroa Indians to accompany him and two French soldiers from Illinois to Mobile, the capital of Louisiana. Perhaps from motives of robbery, the Coroa Indians fell upon the Frenchmen while in-transit, slaying all three of them. The perpetrators vanished into the

forest, eventually taking refuge among the Yazoo Indians with whom they shared their booty.

Father Antoine Davion discovered the scene of the massacre while traveling to the Arkansas to visit Focault. Shocked by the gruesome spectacle, Davion buried the bodies and hastened to Mobile to recount the tragedy to Governor Jean Baptiste Lemoyne Bienville. Outraged by the heinous act of violence, Bienville urged the ever-faithful Quapaw to punish the Coroa. As a result of the Quapaw reprisals, the Coroa were nearly exterminated.¹⁹

The Arkansas mission failed. Many years would pass before a "black robe" walked among the Quapaw again. As far as French settlement is concerned, there is little record of activity on the Arkansas from 1702-1721, indicating that the area may have been abandoned.²⁰



Figure 7. Indian taking a scalp. From Letters and Notes on the Manners, Customs and Condition of the North American Indians by George Catlin.

CHAPTER 2

THE LAW COLONY

The Province of Louisiana had not prospered under government organization. French officials realized that to cope with British competition and to benefit from her discoveries, that colonies must be established. In 1712, Antoine Crozat accepted a 15-year charter, essentially a trade monopoly, under the condition that he colonize Louisiana. Crozat's plans never materialized. French commercial laws, low fur prices, and the trade monopoly crippled the province. In 1717, the responsibility to colonize Louisiana passed from Crozat to John Law, wealthy financier and director general of the Royal Bank of France.¹

John Law was born in Edinburgh, Scotland, in 1671. Little is known of Law's early life, but at the age of 23, the young Scot was in London where he killed a man in a duel. Condemned to death for his actions, Law escaped to the continent and lived the roving life of a gambler. During his nefarious career, Law developed his financial genius and pioneered the concept of issuing paper currency. In 1716, Law founded the private Bank General in France. Because of his financial success, the French government appointed Law director general of the Royal Bank of France and offered him a 25-year charter for the Louisiana fur trade. Law received commercial and political control of Louisiana and, in return, promised to colonize the province. To administer Louisiana, Law formed Companie d'Occident, which became known as Companie des Indies after Law's acquisition of the Indies trade in 1719.²

John Law's scheme to colonize Louisiana was ambitious. Extensive tracts of land, known as concessions, were granted to individuals who agreed to bear the cost of colonization. With settlers in high demand, many emigrants were secured from overcrowded European jails and hospitals. Great numbers of slaves were imported, thus laying the foundation for an agricultural economy. In 1718, New Orleans was laid-out, and Fort Chartres established to protect the growing French population in the Illinois Country. During the same year, plans were formulated to establish a concession between Illinois and lower Louisiana to facilitate trade and communication between both growing population centers. In turn, Mississippi River convoys would create a ready market for products of such a concession. The potential of an intermediate station was so great that shrewd entrepreneur John Law reserved this concession for himself. Law needed a suitable location roughly equidistant between both population centers. The site of De Tonti's former trading post proved ideal.³

John Law appointed Jacques Levens as manager and trustee of his concession. In August 1721, Levens and about fifty French colonists took possession of the tract. Approximately two-hundred German farmers were expected to arrive in the following months. Levens established the colony on a "beautiful plain surrounded by fertile valleys and a little stream of fine clear wholesome water." Lieutenant La Boulaye and a garrison of 17 soldiers arrived on the Arkansas to protect the civilians, the growing river commerce, and trade with the Quapaw. The garrison occupied a site at Ouyapes, a Quapaw village near the mouth of the Arkansas, some eighteen miles down-stream from the Law Colony. From this vantage point, troops could control Mississippi River traffic and be within reach of the colonists should they require protection.⁴

Meanwhile, the "Mississippi bubble," as Law's scheme to develop Louisiana was called, burst! The overissue of paper currency to support the colonization of the province caused the ruin of Law's financial empire. The former banker left France in shame and his estates were confiscated. The colonial enterprise was discredited, and investment capital ceased to flow. *Compagnie des Indes*, under new management, was forced to seek different sources of revenue. The only assets left, however, were the fur trade and the possibility of opening commerce with the Spanish southwest.⁵

Rumors of gold and silver mines in Spain's southwestern provinces circulated widely. If a route could be found that linked Louisiana to the southwest, *Compagnie* officials reasoned, the Louisiana venture could finally reap a profit. To explore the possibility of using the Arkansas River as a route to the southwest, the *Compagnie* commissioned Benard de la Harpe to undertake an expedition.

Torrential rains and flooding along the Arkansas River plagued the colonists and soldiers during their first year on Law's concession. When La Harpe arrived on the Arkansas on March 1, 1722, he found Lieutenant La Boulaye and Second Lieutenant De Francome living at the Quapaw village of Osotouy. Initially, La Boulaye had located the garrison on the Mississippi River, but because of high water, moved it one month later to a site about eighteen-miles upriver. A single soldier, Saint Dominique, remained at the former location to await the arrival of delinquent trade goods. La Harpe found the new post scarcely deserving of notice. Lieutenant Jean Benjamin Francois Dumont, scientist for the expedition, commented that "there is no fort in the place" at all. Improvements consisted of "only four or five palisaded houses, a guard house and a cabin which serves as a storehouse." Concerning the remainder of the garrison, La

Boulaye explained that they were sent to the Law colony to assist the inhabitants in cultivating their fields.⁶

On March 2, La Harpe proceeded to the concession approximately one and one half miles west-north-west of the post. Here he discovered about forty seven persons in all. The two hundred Germans slated to occupy the concession had learned of Law's failure and settled instead on Delaire's grant in lower Louisiana.⁷ The season had been so wet on the Arkansas that the colonists were unable to raise a crop or even trade for provisions from the Indians who saved not even enough corn for the next season's planting. Few improvements had been made over the course of a year, and La Harpe sadly noted that "their works still consist of only a score of cabins poorly arranged and three acres of cleared ground."⁸

La Harpe remained at the colony until March 10, long enough to barter for supplies from the Indians and register colonists for the Compagnie. Dumont spent his time laying out streets, along which permanent houses could be built. Departing the colony, the explorers ascended the Arkansas River and devoted a number of days to making scientific observations. Because of low water, however, the party ended its ascent somewhere in the vicinity of Cadron Creek. La Harpe landed once again at Law's concession only to find that the majority of the colonists had "gone down the river." Ironically, the departing Frenchmen narrowly missed a supply boat dispatched from New Orleans. Lamenting the failure of the enterprise, La Harpe wrote that it was "a very great injury, this concession being absolutely necessary to this post, for the help in provisions that it will furnish to the convoys, destined for navigation of this river."⁹ At least a few Frenchmen, however, did remain on the concession.

Deron de Artaquette, an official of Compagnie des Indes, visited the concession a year later. While at the faltering colony, he observed: "only three miserable huts, fourteen Frenchmen and six negroes whom Sr. Dufresne, who is the director there for the company employs in clearing the land. Since they have been on this land they have not even been able to raise Indian corn for their nourishment, and they have been compelled to trade for it and send even to Illinois for it." De Artaquette visited the garrison later the same day and found that the post contained a "hut for Commandant La Boulaye and a barn which serves as lodging for the soldiers stationed there."¹⁰

Unimpressed by the developments De Artaquette found on the Arkansas, Compagnie des Indes officially abandoned the concession in 1726. Governor Bienville ordered partial

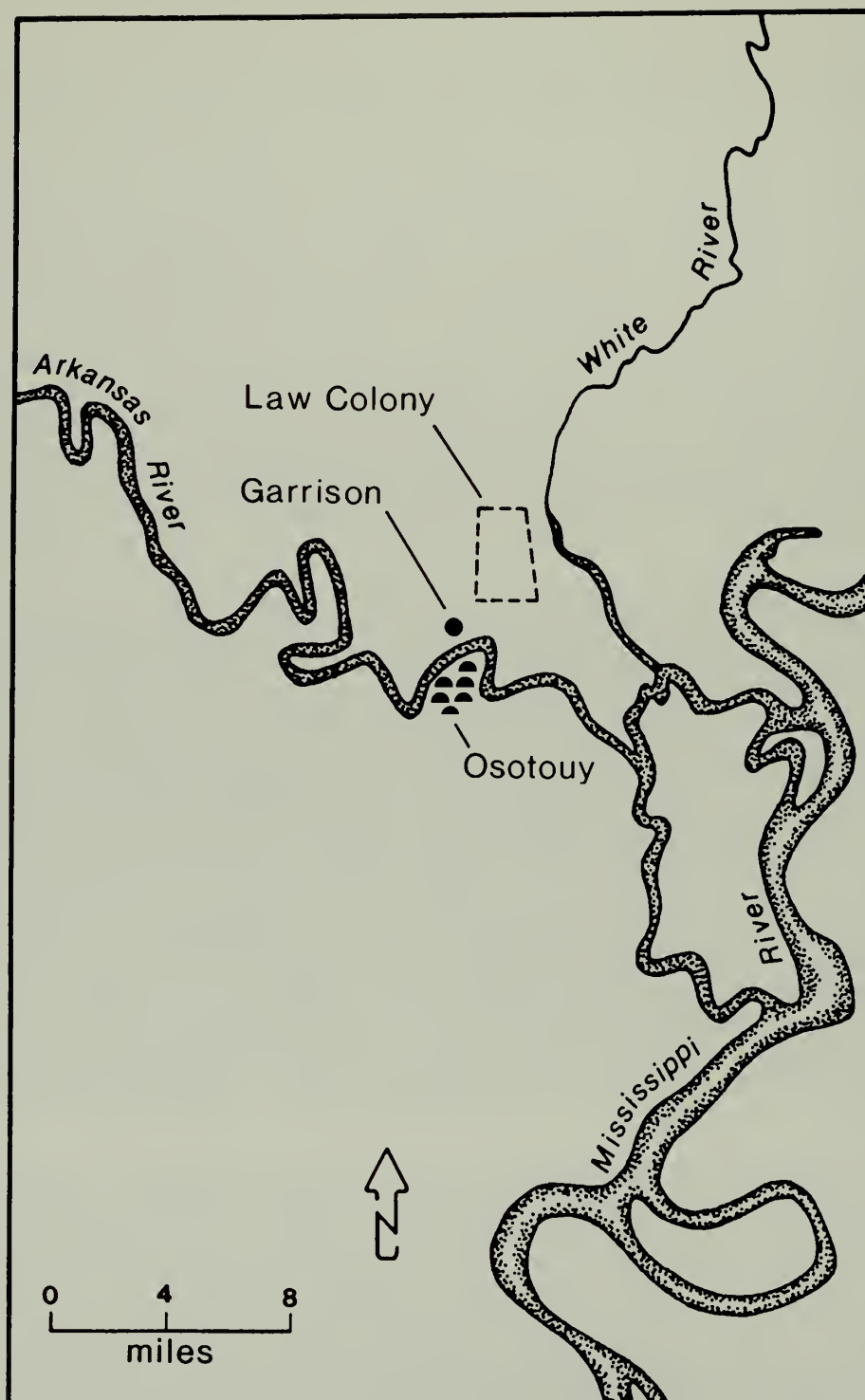


Figure 8. The location of the John Law Colony and Arkansas Post from 1721-1726. In 1721, wealthy financier John Law established a colony in the vicinity of De Tonti's former trading house.

evacuation of the post recommending that a garrison of eight men remain to maintain an alliance with the Quapaw. Because of spiraling costs and a depressed fur trade, the French government relied once again on missionaries to preserve the goodwill of Indians. In 1726, the year the garrison abandoned the post, the French government contracted with the Jesuits to send a priest to the Arkansas to minister to the Quapaw and 14 remaining Frenchmen.

In 1727, Father Paul du Poisson, a Jesuit, took up residence at the failed concession. Selecting the house of the former commander as his rectory, Du Poisson began his ministry. Among the remaining colonists were three married men (Pierre Douay, Baptiste Thomas, and one called St. Francois) and eight bachelors (Poiterin, Montpierre, Jean Mignon, Jean Hours, Jean le Long, Bartelemias, and Du Fresne). For ministering to his tiny flock, Du Poisson received a stipend of 800 livres, a sum barely adequate for the support of a mission in the wilds of Arkansas. Later in the year, Brother Crucy joined Du Poisson to assist in the ministry. Brother Crucy, however, died of sunstroke two years later, forcing Du Poisson to leave the Arkansas in search of additional support. The unfortunate priest was caught at Fort Rosalie during the Natchez Indian massacre of 1729. Reportedly, Du Poisson was beheaded while kneeling at the chapel altar. For a second time, the Arkansas mission failed.¹¹

Angered with French occupation of their lands, the Natchez Indians had set out to exterminate the French. These Indians lived in several towns near the present-day city of Natchez, Mississippi. The tribe numbered about six-thousand, and was able to put between one-thousand to twelve-hundred warriors in the field. The Natchez offensive culminated in the debacle at Fort Rosalie where 250 Frenchmen were murdered and countless numbers of women and children were carried off into captivity. It was this massacre that claimed the life of Father Paul du Poisson and ended the Arkansas mission. In retaliation, the French government waged a two-year campaign against the Natchez. In 1731, with the aid of the Choctaw Indians, the French nearly exterminated this formerly powerful nation. The surviving Natchez fled to the Chickasaw nation, enlisted the aid of their hosts, and continued to harass the French.¹²

Compagnie des Indes, having borne the expense of the Natchez conflict, decided that Louisiana would never be a paying investment. The Compagnie was, therefore, released from its charter, and Louisiana became a royal province once again. Ironically, the resident French population on Law's former concession, attracted by the abundance of the Arkansas region, had more than doubled.

CHAPTER 3

TRAPPING ON THE ARKANSAS

The Arkansas country abounded in natural resources. According to one official report, pelts from the fox, bear, mountain lion, martin, beaver, otter, raccoon, buffalo, and wolf were abundant in Arkansas.¹ The area was a particularly important source of bear's oil or "manteca," a substance prized by Europeans because of its preservability. Quapaw hunters, alone annually produced between 1,250-1,500 gallons of the prized oil that was stored in empty brandy casks and shipped to New Orleans.²

Of approximately thirty French residing on Law's former concession, most were hunters who also conducted trade with the neighboring Quapaw. Attracted by commercial opportunities, several French merchants visited the French village. These entrepreneurs were the center of all commercial activity, and supplied the Indians and French trappers with material comforts in exchange for the season's catch of furs. The merchant sold the furs in New Orleans for a tidy profit, and returned again to the Arkansas with knives, traps, axes, clothing, rum and brandy, and trinkets for the Indian market. The most important goods brought to the Arkansas, however, were powder and shot. As one resident commented, these are commodities "more valuable than silver, as everybody in this land is a hunter."³ Traders brought the following items to Arkansas for the Quapaw in 1775.⁴

TRADE GOODS DESTINED FOR THE QUAPAW

1	Dress Coat--Scarlet--with silver braid
1	Pair Trousers
25	Rifles
100	Ounces of Wool Ribbon
45	Butcher Knives
24	Pocket Combs
12	Pair Scissors
50	Wad Pullers
300	Flints

41/2 Ounces of Red Silk Ribbon
2 Pair Shoes
2 Pair Stockings
91/2 lbs. of Vermillion
48 Steels for striking flints
150 Needles
9 Hats with silver embroidery
1 Decorated Shirt

Life on the Arkansas was difficult for the Frenchman. Lacking sufficient capital, he conducted business through the traditional "hunting-on-credit" system. The merchant advanced goods on credit to the trapper who then repaid the loan with the products of the year's catch. Any unpaid balance became a junior lien and was added to the following season's debt. Even if the trapper enjoyed a successful season, delivering his products to the merchant was no easy task. Roving bands of Chickasaw and Osage Indians preyed upon the Frenchmen. If trappers were fortunate enough to survive an encounter with these Indians, they often limped back to the post deprived of the products of the hunt, their firearms, ammunition, and clothing. Unable to pay the merchant, such men labored for years under permanent indebtedness.⁵

The trapper spent only part of the year in the Arkansas wilds. Following the winter hunt, he returned to the safety of the civilian community where old men, women, and children resided the entire year. According to Perrin du Lac, a traveler in the Arkansas country, trappers at home occupied themselves with a number of diversions including "dancing, drinking or doing nothing: similar in this respect to the savage with whom they live the greater part of the year and whose taste and manner they contract."⁶ Some attention was devoted to agriculture--corn, tobacco, cotton, and wheat were grown in communal fields near the village--but only enough "for the support of their homes and beasts of burden."⁷ On more than one occasion, a poor growing season pushed the post residents to the brink of starvation, forcing them to depend on the very convoys that they were to have provided.

Much to the consternation of Louisiana officials, agriculture on the Arkansas remained underdeveloped. Even though soils were superior and markets accessible by river,

French trappers preferred their semi-nomadic lifestyle to tilling the soil. Consequently, Arkansas Post never developed as a French agricultural colony.



Figure 9. Making a set. Original housed at the Jefferson National Expansion Memorial, St. Louis.



Figure 10. Preparing skins for market. Original housed at the Jefferson National Expansion Memorial, St. Louis.



Figure 11. Summer evening in a French village. Illinois State Historical Library.

CHAPTER 4

ARKANSAS RIVER, TRADE ROUTE

Benard de La Harpe thought "a very advantageous trade" could be carried on with the Spaniards by using the Arkansas River as a trade route. The first successful expedition, however, reached Sante Fe along a much different course.

In 1739, Pierre Mallet and his younger brother Paul, undertook the first successful expedition to Santa Fe. In the company of six voyageurs, the Mallet brothers left St. Louis, ascended the Missouri and Platte Rivers, then worked southward deep into the heart of Spanish country. On July 24, the travelers reached Santa Fe and were cordially welcomed.

The Frenchmen departed Santa Fe nine months later, this time journeying eastward and picked up the Arkansas River. Paul and Pierre Mallet followed the Arkansas River, reaching Arkansas Post in July, 1740. The Mallet brothers settled at Arkansas Post. Paul married and accepted the life of an inhabitant (a resident trader and farmer). Pierre remained a voyageur, trapping and trading on the Arkansas River.¹

The return of Paul and Pierre Mallet touched off a flurry of activity, and numerous expeditions to Santa Fe were launched. Spanish officials, however, alarmed by the increasing number of Frenchmen entering their dominion, thereafter seized all goods as contraband and greeted the entrepreneurs with imprisonment. In actuality, only a handful of French voyageurs ever reached Santa Fe. The real benefit to Louisiana resulted from the relationships the French established with the Comanche, Pawnee, Wichita, Jumano, and other tribes. Commerce with western Indians burgeoned, and the tiny French settlement on the Arkansas gained importance as a center of Indian trade.²

CHAPTER 5

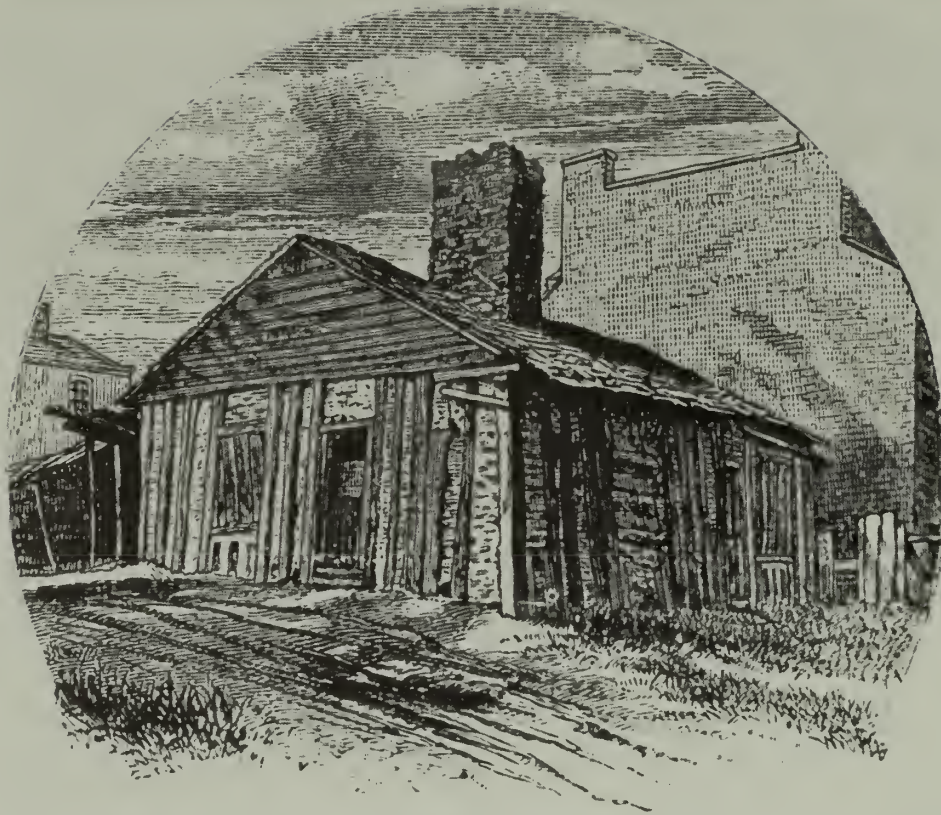
A PERMANENT GARRISON ON THE ARKANSAS

The French government, eager to protect the growing river commerce and trade with the Indians, established a permanent military garrison on the Arkansas. Late in 1731, First Ensign De Coulangue and a 12-man detachment arrived on the Arkansas River. De Coulangue located the fort in the vicinity of the tiny habitant village that had emerged from the ruin of Law's colony, on the same site formerly occupied by La Boulaye and De Tonti. Construction of fortifications began immediately. By 1734, two substantial barracks, a powder magazine, and a prison were completed. Since the fort had no storehouse, trade goods were packed in the spaces between gables in the barracks. Presumably, the buildings were enclosed by a log stockade. This establishment and the nearby civilian community were known collectively by the French as Poste de Arkanse or Arkansas Post.

Shortly after De Coulangue came to the Arkansas, he was joined by Father Avond, a missionary sent to minister the French and Quapaw. The 600 livres Avond received for his service was barely adequate for survival. The priest domiciled in a "makeshift hut" of mud and logs. "I have lived elsewhere in such dwellings," commented a visiting missionary, "but nowhere did I have so much fresh air. The house is full of cracks from top to bottom."¹

The few soldiers stationed at Arkansas Post could not possibly police the surrounding country with any degree of effectiveness. To dissuade the British from encroaching on Arkansas soil, the French cultivated the goodwill of the neighboring Quapaw. Medals of friendship were awarded to key tribal members, and presents were distributed to the tribe on an annual basis. In return for this declaration of friendship, the Quapaw provided a police force for the post environs, expelled British hunters operating in the area, and tracked down deserters and runaway slaves.²

In most cases, the duty of the soldier was local. Time was relegated between drill, guard duty, and work in the post garden. For this the soldier received a trifling \$9 per month. For occasional duty on stockade repair, he received an additional stipend. The daily ration consisted of bread, beans, rice, and salt pork. Occasionally, a liberal allowance of eau de vie or liquor was dispensed to "revive" the troops. Low wages and monotony resulted in a high rate of desertion. Sometimes, however, a threat of Indian attack shattered the boredom of garrison life.³



"In those days the houses were nearly all built of hewn logs."

Figure 12. A typical French house. From The Old South by Edward King.

In 1733, De Coulange reported that his tiny garrison was "menaced from all sides." Following their defeat at the hands of the French, the remaining Natchez Indians had joined the Chickasaw, staunch allies of the British, and began harassing the French from their lands east of the Mississippi.⁴ To the west, the populous Osage nation endangered the post. Days before, these Indians killed 11 French hunters on the Arkansas.

Hostilities on the Arkansas River were only part of a general unrest in Louisiana. Eager to compete with France for the Louisiana trade in peltries, the British agitated the Chickasaw and other eastern tribes against France and her allies. To the alarm of the French, the Osage were also responsive to British overtures. In an effort to halt the erosion of French influence among the Louisiana tribes and stop Chickasaw aggression, French officials organized a campaign against these Indians.

CHAPTER 7

WAR WITH THE CHICKASAW

The Chickasaw numbered between three-thousand to four-thousand and occupied a sizeable territory centered around the headwaters of the Tombigbee, Yazoo, and Tallahatchie Rivers in present-day northern Mississippi. Noted for their warlike disposition, the Chickasaw fought constantly with neighboring tribes including the Quapaw. James Adair--Scottish merchant, linguist, and author--spent nearly a generation among these Indians, cementing them firmly to the British. It was with little effort then that the British focused the warlike tendencies of the Chickasaw against the French.¹

The French urged the Quapaw to strike against their eastern enemy, and agreed to pay them for any Chickasaw scalps brought to the post. In June 1732, a Quapaw band attacked the Chickasaw, killed two and took one captive, whom they intended to burn to death. Quapaw chiefs visited the governor in New Orleans and, as a measure of their good faith, presented him with seven Chickasaw scalps. The governor exhorted his guests. As a consequence, the number of scalps taken by the Quapaw the following year, increased to twenty-five or more.

Quapaw reprisals against the Chickasaw alone were unsuccessful. In 1736, the French government organized an expedition against these Indians. First Ensign Jean St. Therese de Langloiserie, commandant of Arkansas Post for the past two years, persuaded a number of Quapaw to participate in the campaign. The warriors from the Arkansas villages joined the expedition too late, however, to be of much assistance. The French failed in this attempt to crush the Chickasaw. Moreover, the former commandant of Arkansas Post, First Ensign De Coulange, lost his life in the attempt.

The French organized a second expedition against the Chickasaw. In 1738, several French officers visited Arkansas Post to enlist Quapaw warriors in a mission against their joint enemy. Following a two-week council, the majority of Quapaw warriors agreed to join the expedition. A total of 21 Quapaw Indians left immediately for the rendezvous point at Chickasaw Bluffs to hunt for the growing army. On December 22, 70 more Quapaw Indians led by a new post commandant, Jean Francois Tisserant de Montechervaux, joined the force. Among the French army were a number of Huron warriors. Suspicious of these eastern Indians who "speak with the crafty tongues of serpents," the Quapaw

withdrew their support and returned to their villages.² Thus, for a second time, the Quapaw escaped defeat at the hands of the Chickasaw.

In 1740, the French government organized yet a third campaign. Determined to eradicate the Chickasaw, an unprecedented force of 3,600 French and Indians was gathered. Learning of the pending attack by this superior number, the Chickasaw shrewdly petitioned for peace. Eager to end the expensive campaign, the French government entered a truce with the Chickasaw and disbanded its army.

French efforts to deal with the Chickasaw were ultimately unsuccessful. These Indians remained unshaken in their loyalty to the British and, in a short time, resumed aggressions against the French. Armed with British weapons, roving bands of Chickasaw persecuted French trappers and their Indian allies. The decade of the 1740s witnessed increased strife throughout Louisiana. Chickasaw bands operated in the vicinity of Arkansas Post, placing the garrison and habitant village in peril.

CHAPTER 7

THE CHICKASAW ATTACK ARKANSAS POST

On May 7, 1743, Chickasaw Indians ambushed a trading party from Arkansas Post. The trader Guillaume, his wife, and seven of their engages or employees were ascending the Mississippi River. A short distance below the mouth of the Arkansas, a Chickasaw band fell upon the group. Guillaume and his wife escaped their assailants by diving into the river and swimming to the west bank. One Frenchman was killed and the remaining five captured by their assailants. The threat of an attack on Arkansas Post seemed imminent.

In May, 1749, Arkansas Post became the target of a Chickasaw war party. At the time of the attack, First Ensign Louis Xavier Martin Delino de Chalmette had commanded the post for less than a year. The young soldier, wrote Governor Bienville, "is exact in all his duties, is suitable for any kind of assignment . . . and possesses all the sentiments proper to an officer."¹ At his disposal, the new commandant had only 12 soldiers, the remnant of a 20-man garrison recently reduced by desertion.

Situated about one and one half miles west-north-west of the fort was the French hamlet, residence of the thirty or more French civilians who trapped and traded with the Indians. Most prominent among them was one named Linctot, an old resident with an extensive household including two women, five children, seven slaves, a horse, an ox, four cows, and ten pigs. Guillaume and his wife owned two slaves, four oxen, six cows, and three pigs. De Chalmette lived at the post with his wife and owned three slaves, a yoke of oxen, and four cows. Other inhabitants included Flamant, the post interpreter; La Jeuness, Bourg, Novin, and Paul Mallet, all married men. Several men were absent from the post hunting on the upper Arkansas River. Among them were Carignan, Brindamour, Pertuy, Michel Lalemant, Bourge, Gagnete, Joffrellon, Boye, Des Catteaux, Bontemps, and Paul Mallet's older brother Pierre, known to the post residents as Mallet l'aine.

Normally, the Quapaw Indians proved to be an excellent deterrent to Indian raids. A village at the mouth of the Arkansas River blocked entrance to all who were unfriendly to France. Unfortunately for the post residents, extensive flooding in the Spring of 1748 destroyed the Quapaw fields, forcing the Indians to relocate some fifteen miles above the post. The highway to Arkansas Post lay unprotected.

On the eve of the attack, a superior force of 150 Chickasaw Indians led by the seasoned warrior Payamataha, ascended the Arkansas River. Finding the Quapaw absent from their village, the war party proceeded silently to Arkansas Post. In the darkness of night, Payamataha laid plans for his attack.

At the first light of morning, the screaming warriors fell upon the sleeping French village. In the ensuing skirmish, six men were killed and eight women and children taken captive. During the resulting confusion, the surviving habitants fled to the safety of the fort and alerted the garrison. While the Chickasaw looted and burned the village, De Chalmette placed his men in a state of readiness. Musket barrels bristled from the rickety stockade as the tiny detachment waited in grim-faced silence. Women and children huddled in the safety of the soldiers' barracks. What seemed like an eternity took only moments. In an explosion of activity, 150 painted Indians burst from the forest, and attempted to storm the fort. With nerves of steel, De Chalmette waited until the attackers were within yards of the stockade. At his command, the soldiers greeted the Indians with a volley. A deafening roar filled the air. The smoke cleared and two warriors lay dead on the field. Payamataha had received a serious wound, forcing the Chickasaw to beat a hasty retreat. The raid probably lasted less than one hour.²

Although the garrison withstood the Chickasaw attack, the vulnerability of the isolated outpost was painfully evident. With six men murdered and eight women and children carried off into captivity, French officials could no longer ignore English subversion and the Chickasaw threat. Actually, the raid on Arkansas Post was only one in a series of incidents that locked France and England in a bitter 7-year struggle to control Louisiana.

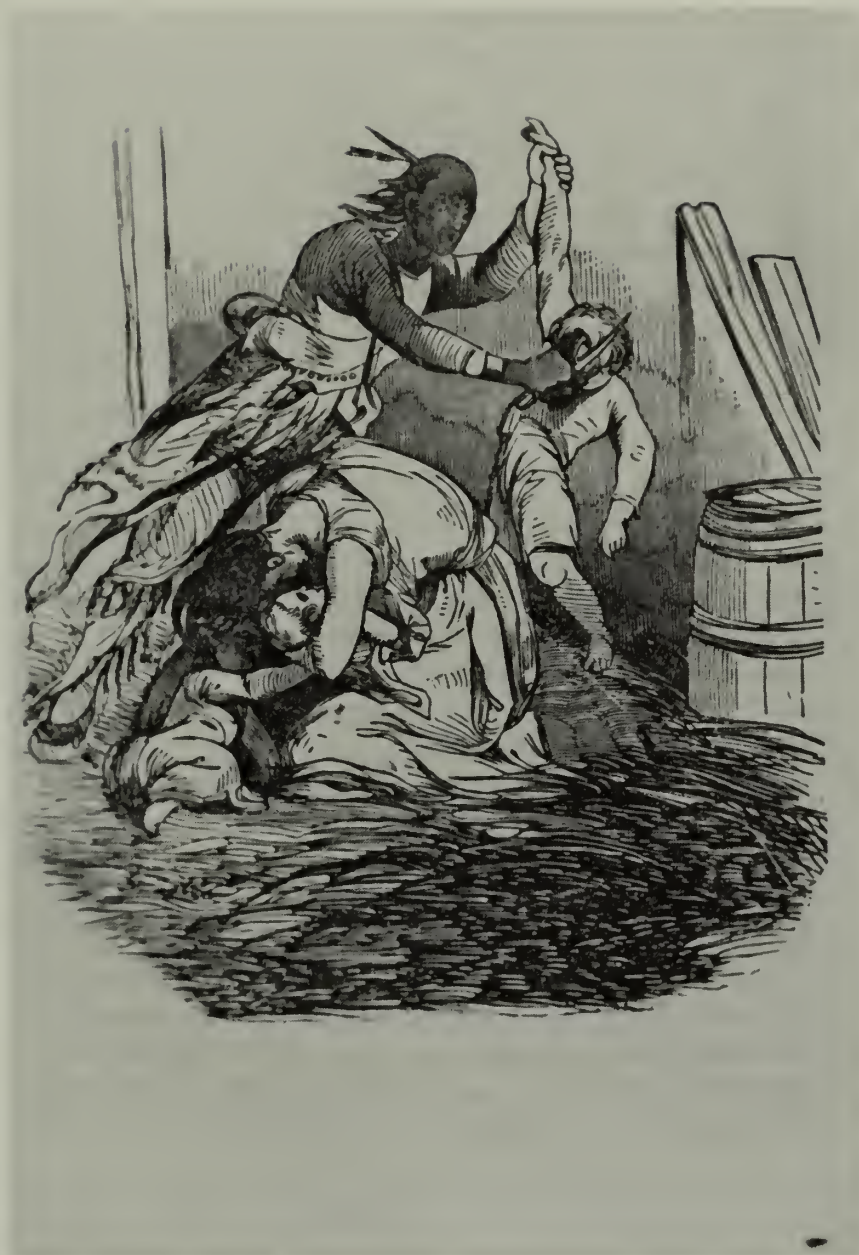


Figure 13. An Indian raid. In 1749, the Chickasaw attacked Arkansas Post, killing six men and capturing eight women and children. From Letters and Notes on the Manners, Customs and Condition of the North American Indians by George Catlin.

CHAPTER 9

ARKANSAS POST IN THE FRENCH AND INDIAN WAR

Relations with the British had steadily eroded, and in anticipation of a major conflict, the French began to strengthen their military posts. The visit of 1751 to Arkansas Post by Jean Bernard Bossu, a captain of the French marines, confirmed that the fort was not in a defensible condition. Later in the year, Lieutenant Paul Augustin le Pelletier de la Houssaye arrived on the Arkansas with a 50-man detachment and orders to put the post in a state of readiness.¹ De la Houssaye was an accomplished officer whom Governor Vaudreuil described as "exact in his duty." Vaudreuil granted the new commandant a monopoly on the Indian trade. In return, De la Houssaye would pay for the cost of a new post from the proceeds.²

The vulnerability of Arkansas Post, painfully evident after the Chickasaw raid of 1749, prompted the French to relocate in the vicinity of their Quapaw allies. The Quapaw Indians had moved upriver in 1748 because of flooding on the lower Arkansas. The new site, called Ecores Rouges or Red Bluffs by the French, was the first high ground encountered within 40-river miles of the mouth of the Arkansas.³

Construction of the new post began in October, and it may not have been entirely finished until 1755. On completion, the fort was enclosed by an 11-foot-high wall of double pickets, 720 feet in length. Platforms for cannon batteries were set in the angles formed by three bastions. Inside the fort, a number of buildings were constructed including officers' quarters, barracks, a chapel, oven, magazine, and latrines. An additional building contained the hospital and storeroom, and also housed the storekeeper and interpreter. A prison occupied the space beneath a cannon platform in one of the bastions. The civilian community, now containing 31 Frenchmen and 14 slaves, relocated near the fort.⁴

War soon erupted between the French and British. Although a pitched struggle over control of the Mississippi River and Louisiana ensued, Arkansas Post was not directly involved in the conflict. Other problems consumed the energy of the tiny garrison.

Safeguarding the commerce of the Mississippi River became a primary concern to the French. Captain de Reggio succeeded De la Houssaye as post commandant in 1753 and three years later, relocated the post near the mouth of the Arkansas. Scarcely nine miles from the Mississippi,

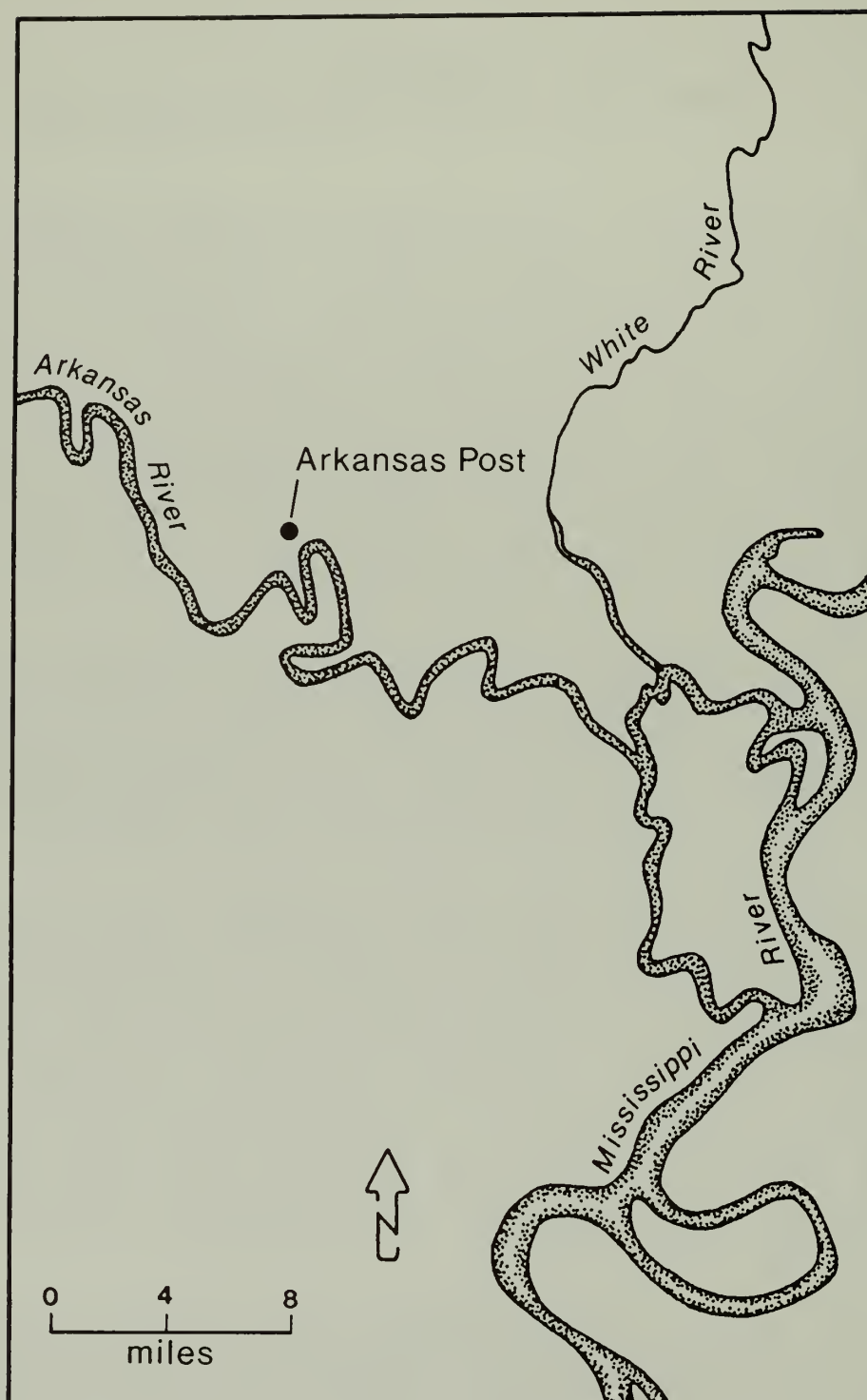


Figure 14. The location of Arkansas Post from 1751-1756. As a result of the 1749 Chickasaw raid, Arkansas Post was moved further upriver.

soldiers could more easily protect French supply lines. Unfortunately for Arkansas Post, this convenience was not without a price. During the years that the post remained in this location the French fought their own war, a losing struggle against the destructive Arkansas.⁵

Scarcely one year following the relocation of the post, Captain De Gamon de la Rochette replaced De Reggio. La Rochette possessed a good military record but was "greedy of money, rude and forceful of manner." He soon earned the contempt of his command and Father Carrette, the resident missionary.⁶ On his arrival, La Rochette found a polygonal stockade surrounded by parapets, as much a measure of flood control as defense. Inside the fort were a barracks, officers' quarters, powder magazine, and commissary.⁷ At his disposal, La Rochette had about forty soldiers, including a Polish drummer and two officers--First Ensign Dussau, and Second Ensign Bachemin.

The civilians had located their houses, eight in number, in a line on the river bank. The fort separated them into two groups. At one end lived Etienne Maraffret Layssard, the garde magasin or storehouse keeper. Below Layssard lived Hollindre, a habitant. On the other side of the fort lived Father Carrette, Joseph Laundrouy (post courier), Francois Sarrazin (interpreter), and a habitant named La Fleur.

Layssard was perhaps the most affluent post resident of the day. In addition to his appointment as garde magasin or storehouse keeper, Layssard kept a village wine shop in his home and farmed several fields that he protected from floods with 12-18-inch-high levees. Among Layssard's possessions were 5 slaves, 20 pigs, a milk cow, a flock of chickens, a dog, and a cat.

A particularly wet January in 1758 turned the Mississippi into a raging torrent. The murky brown waters backed-up the Arkansas for many miles, imperiling Arkansas Post. High water topped most of the levees, flooding the lowlands. Only Layssard's garden levee and the parapet of the fort held fast, both scarcely four inches above water. Layssard's house stood on posts above the rising water. Into one room of the tiny dwelling, Layssard crowded his twenty pigs. The second room sheltered Layssard, his wife and four children, five slaves, a dog and cat, and all the squawking chickens he could gather. The cow, for want of space, remained outside knee-deep in water. Other inhabitants, however, were less fortunate.

The flood destroyed Father Carrette's rectory, forcing the priest to say mass in the post dining hall and canteen.

Carrette reaped little satisfaction for his efforts among the "snake worshipping" Quapaw and the "immoral" French. The added insult of conducting mass in a canteen was too much to bear. The room, complained Father Carrette, is totally unsuitable as "everything . . . entered there even the fowls." During Father Carrette's final mass, "a chicken flying over the altar overturned the chalice . . . One of those who ought to have been most concerned . . . exclaimed, 'Oh! behold the shop of the good God thrown down!'" So discouraged was Father Carrette that he auctioned off his household items and left the Arkansas for good.⁸

Arkansas Post slowly recovered from the devastation wrought by the Arkansas. Improvements at the new fort continued. The bakehouse was enlarged and fortified, and the powder magazine rebuilt. To house Indian allies of France, a lodge built of poles and covered with planks was constructed beyond the fort walls. By the end of the year, the cost of constructing the post escalated to \$18,237. Floods continued to be an annual problem. Scarcely five years later, a new commandant would report the fort in ruin.⁹

Meanwhile, the war with Britain was going badly for France. By 1760, the British had won several decisive victories. Anticipating defeat of France in the new world struggle, Louis XV offered western Louisiana to Carlos III, ruler of Spain. Carlos III viewed the province as an economic burden, but because of its proximity to the Spanish southwest, begrudgingly accepted the offer. On November 3, 1762, France ceded Louisiana to Spain by the treaty of Fontainebleau. On February 10, 1763, a treaty was signed ending the war. Great Britain emerged victorious, possessing all of Louisiana east of the Mississippi while Spain now controlled the former French province west of the Mississippi including New Orleans, the provincial capital. France was eliminated as a colonial power on the North American continent.¹⁰

From its establishment to the Seven-Years War, Arkansas Post played an important role in the development of Louisiana. As the first European settlement in the lower Mississippi valley, Arkansas Post helped establish the claim of France to the Mississippi River. As a river port, Arkansas Post provided a midway stopping point for convoys traveling between St. Louis and New Orleans and, in this capacity, assisted in the development of both cities. The tiny community on the Arkansas River acted as a local center of Indian policy. French traders operating from Arkansas Post established loyalties with upriver tribes. Quantities of pelts, a product of these loyalties, passed annually



Figure 15. The location of Arkansas Post from 1756-1779. Arkansas Post was moved downriver in 1756 to safeguard Mississippi River convoys.

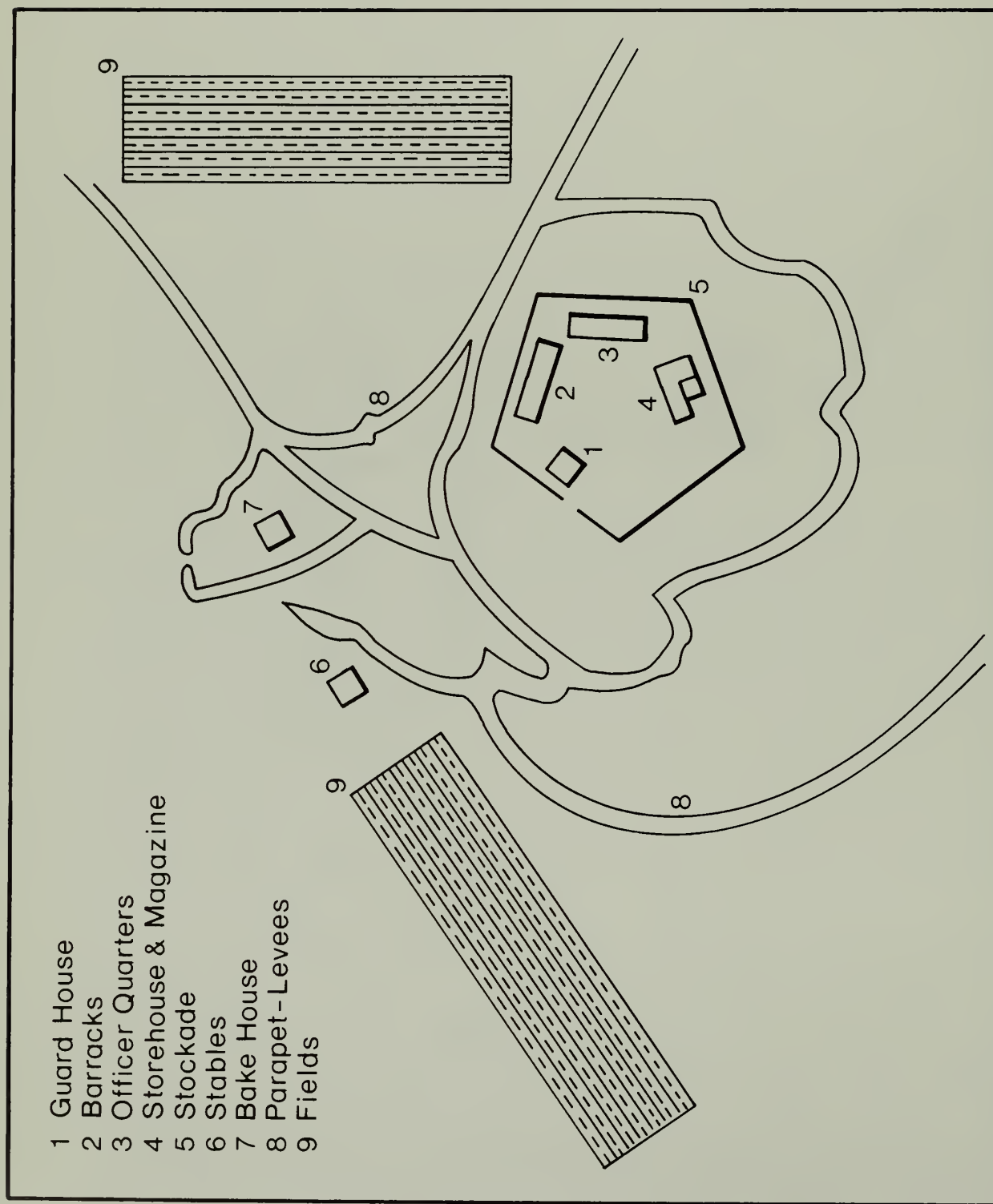


Figure 16. Arkansas Post around 1767-1768. After a sketch made by British captain Philip Pittman.

through Arkansas Post to New Orleans and eventually European markets.

When Spain assumed control of Louisiana, Spanish officials adopted the French system of administration in favor of their traditional mission system. This turn of events reflected highly on the success of French policy. Yet, the Spanish takeover was not free of problems. French and Indians, distrustful of Spaniards, were wary of the new government. If Spain succeeded in winning the confidence of her new subjects, she would not so easily subdue the British on her eastern border. With France removed from the Mississippi valley, Spain faced a new and more aggressive neighbor.

CHAPTER 9

LOUISIANA AS A SPANISH PROVINCE

In 1766, Spanish Governor Don Antonio de Ulloa took possession of Louisiana in the name of King Carlos III. Problems confronting the new government were grave. The allegiance of Indian tribes, distrustful of Spaniards, had to be cultivated. To make matters worse, aggressive British traders, now ensconced on the east bank of the Mississippi, vied for the loyalties of Indians living under Spanish jurisdiction. To accomplish her objectives, Spain adopted the French system of administration: control through the distribution of presents and the fur trade. As vehicles of this policy, French traders already residing among the Indians were retained. To insure loyalty to Spain, all major officials were replaced. The population remained predominantly French.

News of the transfer soon reached Arkansas Post. French and Quapaw alike were greatly concerned about the Spanish takeover. In the spring of 1764, Commandant Pierre Marie Cabaret de Trepie proceeded to New Orleans with the Quapaw chiefs who pleaded with the governor, asking him not to deliver them to the Spaniards. Their request was of no avail. In 1768, Alexander De Clouet, a French officer under service to the Spanish ruler assumed command of Arkansas Post. As his first official act, De Clouet conducted a census that revealed 138 people at the post, including 85 white civilians; 35 black, mulatto, and Indian slaves; and 18 military personnel. All were required to swear allegiance to Spain.

So insurmountable were the problems De Clouet encountered, that he soon wrote in exasperation: "I sweat blood and water."¹ Fearful of the Spanish takeover, deserters from Arkansas Post joined an outlaw band far up the Arkansas River. The outlaws were ruled by "Brindamur, a French Canadian, who by his gigantic strength, made himself a petty king over the rest."² A traveler in the new Spanish province described the Arkansas River as:

the asylum of the most wicked persons without a doubt in all the Endes [sic]. They [the outlaws] pass their scandalous lives in public concubinage with captive Indian women who, for this purpose, they purchase among the heathen, loaning those of whom they tire to others of less power, . . . [for] quieting their lascivious passion; in short they have no other rule than their own caprice and . . . [conduct] themselves like brutes.³

These renegade Frenchmen pledged allegiance to no government and openly defied the new administration by conducting contraband trade with the Indians and entering into intrigues with tribes unfriendly to Spain. The outlaws befriended the Osage Indians, long-time rivals of France and Spain. In 1770, they persuaded the Osage to raid the Caddo Indians, Spanish allies on Red River. As a result of this foray, numerous Caddo women were brought to the outlaw camp and enslaved.⁴

Under normal circumstances, the Spanish government would never accept such a blatant disregard of authority. Unofficially, however, the Spanish tolerated Brindamur and his cutthroats. More serious problems threatened Louisiana and the safety of Arkansas Post.

Seven years of neglect under a lame-duck French administration left the post in a ruinous condition. Almost useless for defense, the fort offered little protection from marauding bands of Osage Indians who, encouraged by French inactivity, increased their depredations against Arkansas trappers.

The Osage Indians were a numerous tribe comprising nearly one-thousand men. The tribe occupied the Missouri Country, and frequently ventured into the Arkansas region to hunt.⁵ To the Spanish, the Osage were particularly aggressive. An official document described the tribe as "daring and insolent, . . . one of the most evil-intentioned of all the nations." Spanish inability to control the Osage may have been the result of the "war-mourning" ceremony. The Osage believed that a deceased warrior required company for his afterlife journey. Such company was provided by the subsequent murder of the first person intercepted by a war party. The scalp of the victim was then buried with the deceased, thus providing the required companionship.⁶

In 1771, Osage aggressions were particularly numerous. In January, Antoine Lepine limped back to the post "in very bad shape," having been robbed by the Osage. Others were less fortunate. Only 180 miles above Arkansas Post, Osage Indians murdered the trapper Doget, his wife, and children. So frequent were their depredations that the commandant expected the Osage to attack Arkansas Post at any moment. The inhabitants feared for their lives throughout the course of the year. The stockade of the fort was practically useless, "having more entrances than those who defend it have fingers." Only 293 of the pickets were fastened down by nails. The cannon, lacking carriages, were useless. Moreover, swollen rivers prevented the Spanish from retreating. In spite of these problems, Commandant DeLeyba



Figure 17. An Osage warrior. From Letters and Notes on the Manners, Customs and Condition of the North American Indians by George Catlin.



Figure 18. An Osage war party. Osage Indians robbed and murdered many trappers on the Arkansas River. From Letters and Notes on the Manners, Customs and Condition of the North American Indians by George Catlin.

stated defiantly that he would engage in "open combat." "There remains for us no other recourse than to die killing." Fortunately for the garrison, the Osage attack never materialized.⁷

The Spanish reacted to Osage aggressions by persuading the Quapaw to wage war on their western relatives. Spain agreed to compensate Quapaw warriors for any scalps delivered to the post. In April, 1772, Quapaw warriors brought back five scalps and one woman and child as prisoners. In a short time the main gate of the fort was burdened by the grim trophies of war, as it had become the custom to hang scalps there. By March 1777, the Osage, weary of Quapaw harassment, petitioned for peace. Peace, however, eluded Arkansas Post.⁸

Competition with aggressive British traders increased markedly following the Seven-Years War. The Chickasaw, motivated by British propaganda, continually harassed hunters from the Spanish post. On January 13 1769, a Chickasaw war party robbed Francis, a resident hunter. Two Englishmen and a Canadian named Charpentier commanded the party. In 1770, the post commandant reported that seven Chickasaw war parties passed through the Arkansas country. Many French hunters were robbed, losing their arms and ammunition to the invaders.

Now with control over the east bank of the Mississippi, British merchants established posts and traded with Indians living under Spanish jurisdiction west of the river. Unfettered by strict trade policies, the British could offer cheaper trade goods and liberal quantities of alcohol. Spanish Indians frequented British posts and were plied with gifts and ardent spirits. At other times, unscrupulous merchants boldly trespassed, carrying their wares and propaganda to the Indian allies of Spain.

In 1769, an Englishwoman, known only as "Magdelon," established a trading post on the east bank of the Mississippi opposite the mouth of the Arkansas River. Mindful of the presence of this aggressive woman, the commandant of Arkansas Post sadly commented: "I see no longer a day of tranquility." Later in the year, Magdelon's barge, referred to by the commandant as a "Floating canteen," entered the Arkansas River. Pretending to be out of provisions, Magdelon and 10 British traders visited the Quapaw villages where they distributed liquor and anti-Spanish propaganda. According to the commandant:

this English woman wishes to persuade the Arkansas [Quapaw] that she will expulse us from this fort, that the savages are going to depend on the English and that

[from her trading post] she would have only one step to make. I would laugh at such talk.⁹

Unfortunately for the Spanish, Magdelon's work among the Quapaw met with some success. In a short time, the commandant bitterly complained that the British "have won ground in the hearts of these wretches [Quapaw Indians]." The rift soon widened to dangerous proportions.¹⁰

In 1770, Joseph Orieta replaced Francois de Mazellieres as commandant at Arkansas Post. Orieta was the first officer of Spanish nationality to command the garrison. The supplanted De Mazellieres resented Orieta and complained to the governor, writing that "the inhabitants and savages, who dislike him [Orieta], speak only of abandoning the post." The Quapaw preferred a French commandant and never accepted Orieta. Relations between these Indians and Spain worsened. The great chief Angaska actually accepted a British medal of friendship. The sub-chief Caiguaioataniga followed suit and allowed 5,000 deerskins to pass into British hands in exchange for a cask of whiskey. Orieta was replaced within a year by Fernando de Leyba, another Spaniard.¹¹

Fernando de Leyba arrived at Arkansas Post in 1772 with his wife, Maria Concepcion Cesar. The post had a population of 78 persons: 32 white males, 30 females and 16 slaves. De Leyba stood no more chance with the Quapaw than had Orieta. Soon after he assumed command, Chief Angaska complained to the governor. Angaska thought that De Leyba disliked the Quapaw, and he wanted him replaced. Matters soon worsened.

On June 13, 1772, De Leyba arrested Nicolas Labauxiere, the post interpreter. The commandant learned that Labauxiere operated among the Quapaw as a British agent. The interpreter had great influence among the Quapaw, however, and was even regarded as a member of the tribe. Apparently, De Leyba understood the delicacy of the situation since he attempted to capture Labauxiere secretly. Unfortunately for De Leyba, the attempt at secrecy was unsuccessful. On the way to the post the prisoner met a Quapaw. Labauxiere spoke to him in passing: "tell my father your chief, in what trouble you see me." The Quapaw Indians responded that very night by surrounding the fort. A chief and five warriors entered the grounds demanding the release of Labauxiere. Should their demand be denied, the Indians threatened to "cut every throat on the post." Unwilling to free the renegade interpreter, De Leyba ended the stand-off by the timely distribution of presents. Even after the Quapaw departed, one malcontent returned demanding "a barrel of whiskey or my head" wrote De Leyba.

The Quapaw did not soon forget Labauxiere's plight. Several days later, some Quapaw visited De Leyba and presented him with a dead horse, demanding whiskey in exchange for it. This was the ultimate Quapaw insult! The warriors threatened to kill everyone in the post if their demands were not honored. The commandant's poor wife fainted and the rest of the women, fearful of their safety, were crying. Apparently, the commandant gave the Indians liquor since Spanish blood was not shed. At the first opportunity, De Leyba sent the prisoner "down the river" for trial. The name of Nicolas Labauxiere disappeared from official records and relations with the Quapaw normalized, somewhat.¹²

The Quapaw continued friendly relations with the British. On November 26, 1773, De Leyba reported that the Quapaw chief, Gran Megre, had adopted an Englishman as his son. The latter built a cabin next to his adopted father's and sold goods to the Indians. In 1774, three Englishmen who married Quapaw women were living among the Indians. They spread propaganda among the tribe, telling them that the dilapidated condition of the fort was proof that the British would soon seize the province and expel the Spanish. The post commandant grasped the opportunity to impress the Indians. He hastily repaired the stockade and called a council with the Quapaw chiefs. Extolling the virtues of the Spaniards, the commandant asked that the British be expelled from the Quapaw villages. To end the council and impress upon the Indians the strength and commitment of Spain, the commandant ordered a discharge of three cannon. According to De Leyba:

The Indians were marveled when, from the resulting commotion some glasses and some hats that were hanging up from nails in the wall fell down and the room started trembling . . . And when the Indians saw the effect of the cannon discharges and the repairment of the stockade . . . they said that the Englishmen had been lying to them. Then we had a toast at your Lordship's sake, meanwhile we had another discharge; and the Indians departed happy and rejoiced.¹³

The Englishmen were promptly banished from the Quapaw villages. British competition for the Arkansas fur trade, however, only increased.

In 1775, the Arkansas Post commandant reported that five British traders established a settlement of 18 cabins called Concordia on the east bank of the Mississippi opposite the Quapaw villages. From this base of operations, traders and hunters poured into the Arkansas country, frightening game away and appropriating a significant

portion of the Spanish trade in peltries. According to the post commandant, trespassing hunters obtained 12,000 deerskins and 6,000 pounds of beaver furs on the White and St. Francis rivers during February and March, 1766.¹⁴

CHAPTER 10

ARKANSAS POST IN THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION

In 1775, the American Revolution began. Spain, recognizing an opportunity to be rid of the troublesome British, offered aid to the Patriots. It was reasoned that with American independence, Spain need not fear British aggressions. Arkansas Post had a role in the conflict. Upstream expeditions stopping at the fort received briefings for evading British patrols, and thus kept Spanish-American supply lines open.

Sometime during the summer of 1776, Commandant Orieta died at the post. As his replacement, Governor Louis de Unzaga appointed Captain Balthazar de Villiers. A seasoned officer, De Villiers was a veteran of three campaigns in Flanders. He came to Louisiana in 1749 and served admirably under both the French and Spanish administrations. Unzaga thought De Villiers ideally suited for the difficult command at Arkansas Post.¹

The new commandant and his wife, Francoise Voisin Bonaventure, reached Arkansas Post in September, 1776. De Villiers found a pitifully small French and Spanish community. Among their number were 50 whites and 11 slaves all domiciled in 11 rotting dwellings in the vicinity of the fort. Only 16 soldiers formed the garrison. The fort itself was dilapidated by the annual floods that had plagued the settlement since its relocation in 1756. To Captain De Villiers, Arkansas Post was "the most disagreeable hole in the universe."²

De Villiers confronted the problem of contraband trade. The small garrison on the Arkansas was ill-equipped to deal with large numbers of interlopers and relied on their Indian allies to pillage hunting camps and drive out the British. In October, 1776, Spanish Indians raided a British camp and captured 300 deerskins and many beaver pelts. In the spring of 1777, the Kaskaskia tribe, recently located in Arkansas to escape Iroquois incursions in the Illinois Country, aided De Villiers by compelling British hunters to abandon the White River region. It was not until Spain entered the American War of Independence as allies of France and the Patriots, however, that the majority of British departed. De Villiers then turned his attention to improving Arkansas Post.³

De Villiers had found the location of Arkansas Post unsuitable. In 1777, he wrote: "all the land [around the post] has been covered with water for three weeks and the

entire harvest has been lost," indeed for the fourth year in a row. Heavy rains in the spring of 1779 forced the Mississippi to overflow. The muddy water backed-up the Arkansas River inundating the post. By February 17, there were two feet of water inside the fort. Weary of continual flooding, De Villiers advocated moving the post to higher ground.

Two former sites were favored by De Villiers: the location where the Chickasaw attacked the post in 1749 or Ecores Rouges where De La Houssaye moved the post in 1751. De Villiers preferred Ecores Rouges. He believed that this location was more easily defended and being above the cut-off where the White River entered the Arkansas, would be more effective in keeping British hunters out of the district. Furthermore, De Villiers reasoned that river traffic had slowed so much as a result of British patrols that a site near the Mississippi was no longer necessary. As far as the habitants were concerned, De Villiers believed they would welcome the move.

De Villiers' request to move the post cleared official channels, and on March 16, 1779, the commandant reported that the move to Ecores Rouges had been accomplished. The site selected for the new settlement was three hills on the north bank of the Arkansas River. On the first hill ascending the river, some Quapaw had already settled. On the second hill, De Villiers located a number of Anglo-American families, war refugees from east of the Mississippi. On the third hill he placed the Franco-Spanish

families and projected a fort. Before it was completed, however, Spain entered the American war for independence against Britain.⁴

By the time news of the war reached Arkansas Post, Spanish Governor Jose Galvez had captured Natchez, Manchak, and Baton Rouge and was preparing to move against Mobile and Pensacola. Upon hearing that Spain had entered the war, Commandant De Villiers crossed the Mississippi with a detachment of soldiers and civilian witnesses. The band landed at the deserted British station of Concordia on November 22, 1780, and formally ". . .took possession of the left bank of the Mississippi River opposite to the Arkansas, White, and St. Francis Rivers, as far as the limits of the Natchez garrison as dependencies and jurisdictions of this post."⁵ De Villiers' shrewd action helped reinforce the post-war claim of Spain to the east bank of the Mississippi and the region north of the mouth of the Yazoo River.

During the months following Galvez' action on the Mississippi, the major arena of conflict occurred on the

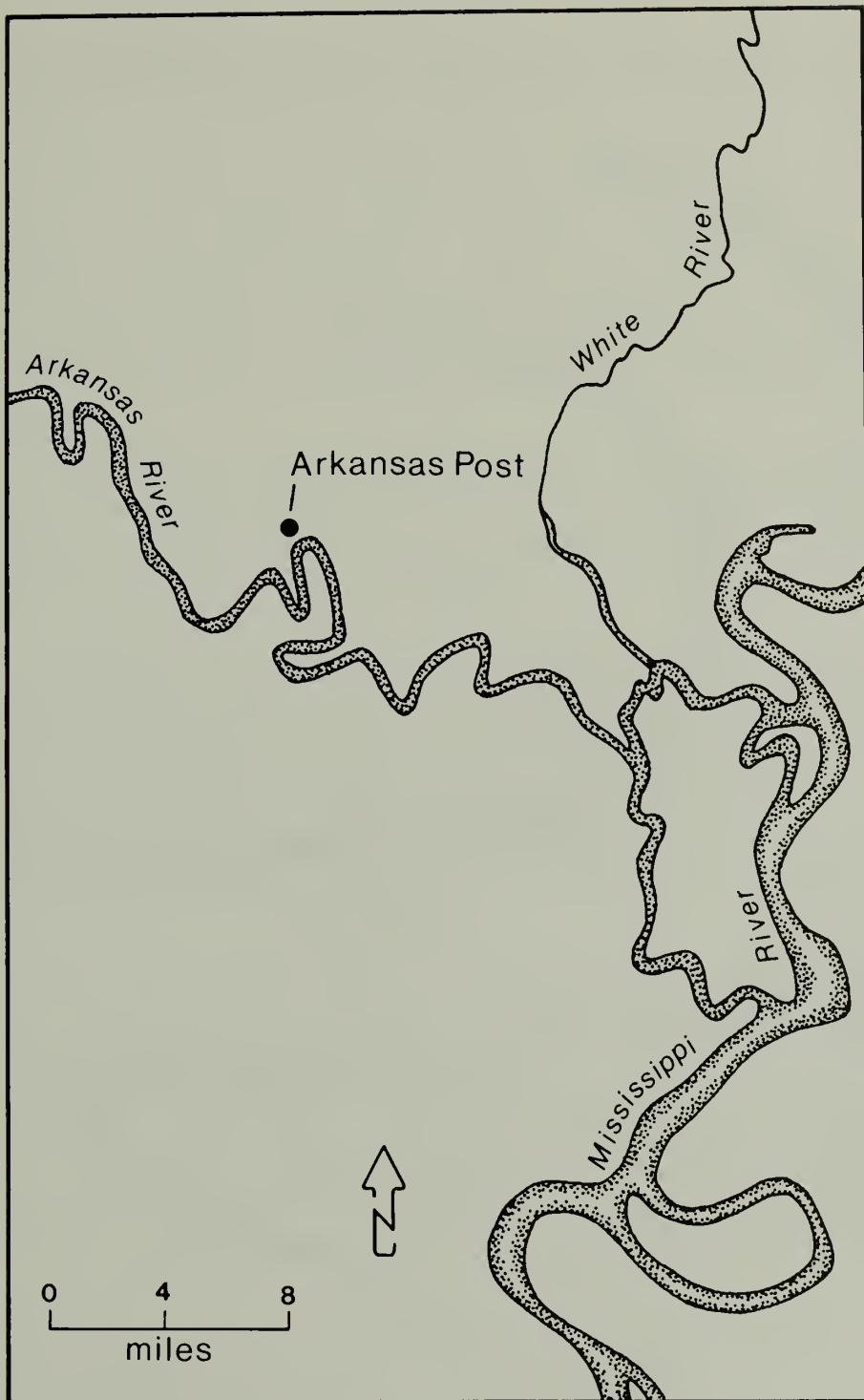


Figure 19. The location of Arkansas Post from 1779-1812. To escape devastating floods, Arkansas Post was again moved upriver in 1779.

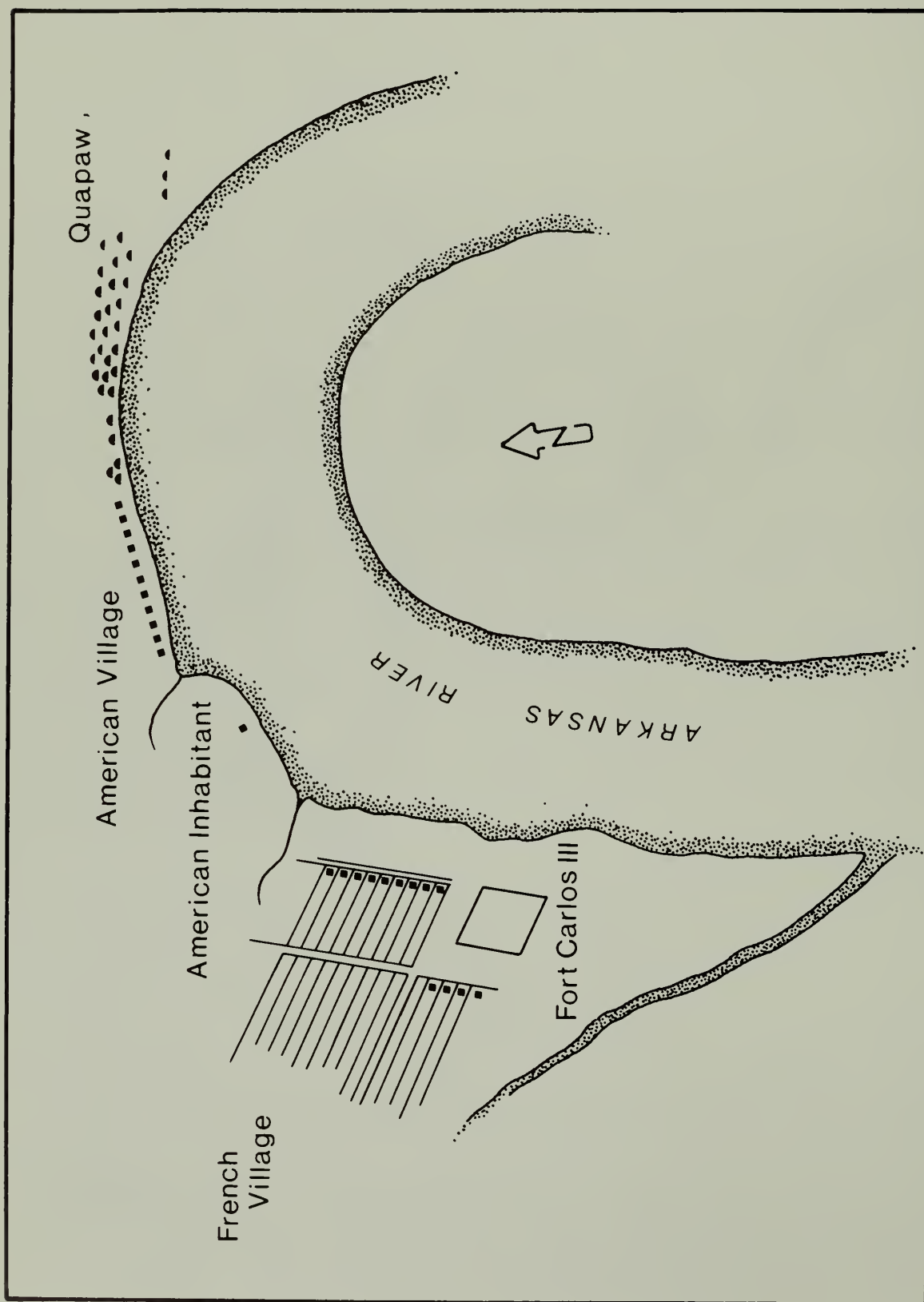


Figure 20. Arkansas Post and vicinity in 1779. After a sketch drawn by Commandant Balthasar de Villiers.

lower Mississippi and in West Florida. In March, 1780, Galvez captured Mobile and soon launched an attack on Pensacola. During the Pensacola seige, insurgents at Natchez under the leadership of John Blommart, rose against the Spaniards. On June 22, 1781, Galvez directed his superior force against the rebels, crushing the rebellion. Blommart and several other leaders were imprisoned in New Orleans. A number of insurgents avoided capture, however, and fled to the Chickasaw, long-time allies of the British. This group united under the leadership of James Colbert. Colbert had been a former British Captain, but retired to the Chickasaw nation following the Spanish capture of Pensacola.

Colbert and the Natchez rebels vowed to disrupt Spanish commerce on the Mississippi and thereby gain the freedom of Blommart and the other insurgents imprisoned in New Orleans. The proximity of this rebel band to Arkansas Post imperiled the Spanish fort.

Commandant De Villiers learned of this newest threat from four Americans who had been imprisoned by the rebels at Natchez. At least one of the rebels, a man named Stilman, formerly resided at Arkansas Post and knew the surroundings particularly well. Thus, De Villiers feared that the rebels posed a threat to the safety of his command. The post inhabitants were fearful for their lives and a day later offered to supply the garrison with pickets for a stockade. De Villiers was overjoyed.⁶

By July 1781, the fort was finally completed. The new stockade, made of red oak pickets, was 13-feet high and about 75-yards to a side. Embrasures in the stockade were covered with bullet-proof sliding panels. A two-foot high banquette surrounded the whole. Inside the fort were a soldiers' barracks, storehouses, and several smaller buildings. De Villiers called his new post "Fort Carlos III" and boasted that the king now has ". . . a solid post capable of resisting anything that may come to attack it without cannon."⁷

Ironically, the first threat De Villiers encountered came from within the garrison. In 1782, two German soldiers--Albert Faust and John Frederick Pendal--and a number of Anglo-American refugees participated in a conspiracy to capture the post for Great Britain. The conspirators planned to open the gates of the fort to British sympathizers who would rush in and butcher the sleeping garrison. Warned by loyal French inhabitants, De Villiers promptly imprisoned the offenders. Both the Germans and two of the Anglo-Americans were tried, found guilty of treason, and executed in New Orleans.⁸

Meanwhile, Colbert and his partisans were attacking Spanish boats on the Mississippi, disrupting the supply line and placing Arkansas Post in a precarious position. Because of successive floods and drought, post residents had to rely almost exclusively on outside sources of food.⁹ On May 2, 1782, Colbert's band captured a boat at Chickasaw Bluffs. On board the vessel was Nicanora Ramos, the wife of the Spanish lieutenant governor of St. Louis, and her four sons. Colbert tried unsuccessfully to exchange his hostages for Blommart. After a 20-day captivity, Colbert released his prisoners, vowing next to capture the Spanish post on the Arkansas. The former prisoners reported this information to Governor Esteban Miro, who responded by dispatching Antonio Soler, second lieutenant of artillery, with a supply of ammunition, two swivel guns, and orders to put the fort into a state of readiness.¹⁰

CHAPTER 11 COLBERT'S RAID

On June 19, De Villiers died in New Orleans following an operation to remove a tumor from his liver. Lieutenant Louis de Villars, a young officer temporarily stationed at Arkansas Post, assumed command until a duly appointed officer could be dispatched. Governor Esteban Miro selected Captain Jacobo Du Breuil for the job.

Captain Du Breuil, his wife, Inez, and their two young children landed at the post in January, 1783. The new commandant mustered the troops for inspection. Du Breuil counted 14 soldiers, the names of most of which have been recorded: Lieutenant Louis de Villars; Sergeant Alexo Pastor; Private First Class Josef Plaseras; Privates Second Class Lucas Perez and Sebastian Molina; and soldiers Marieno Barrios, Bruno Cuisasola, Antonio Longines, Antonio Lopez, Mariano Perez, Augustin Garcia, Pedro Clossin, and Antonio Longevas. The location of the fort, observed Du Breuil, is inadequate as "one could approach within pistol shot before being seen . . ." The village of the inhabitants, scarcely 100 steps away, could shield an enemy in the event of an attack. Du Breuil was not overly alarmed, however, since the possibility of being attacked at the time seemed remote. Preliminary peace treaties had already been signed.¹

Scarcely three months after Du Breuil assumed command, James Colbert launched his long-threatened attack. On April 16, 1783, Colbert and about 100 partisans composed of his 11-half-blood sons, several Natchez rebels and Chickasaw Indians slipped up the Arkansas River. The group had little trouble passing by the Quapaw village near the mouth of the river. Colbert told the intoxicated Chief Angaska that he and 12 Americans came to shake the hand of the new commandant. In his befuddled condition, Angaska allowed the white-men to pass. Colbert's partisans approached within a short distance of the Spanish post. Leaving the boats in the care of seven men, the group made its way overland to the French village.²

At 2:30 a.m., Colbert and the partisans stormed the village. The first shot fired broke the lock on the door of the residence where Lieutenant De Villars and his family lived. De Villars, his wife, Dona Maria Luisa, and a number of other residents were captured without a struggle. The majority of the inhabitants, alerted by shots, took to the woods and made their way safely to the fort.³

At the sound of the first shots, the soldiers of the garrison rushed to the aid of De Villars. Two soldiers were killed in the ensuing skirmish, one losing his scalp. The Spanish, bested by Colbert's superior force, took refuge in the fort. Sergeant Pastor barely escaped his pursuers by running like a rabbit and diving into the fort through an open embrasure.⁴

After pillaging the residences, Colbert next turned his attack on the garrison. The Spanish defenses withstood Colbert's seige. Throughout the night, small arms fire was exchanged, and the Spanish fired more than 300 cannon rounds. The projectiles passed harmlessly over the attackers who were firmly entrenched in a ravine near the fort. At 9:00 a.m., the lieutenant's wife and a member of Colbert's band approached the fort under a flag of truce. The emissary "was shaking with fright" as he handed Colbert's demands to Captain Du Breuil. The note read: "M. Le Capitaine Colbert is sent by his superiors to take the post of the Arkansas and by this power sir, he demands that you capitulate." Du Breuil responded that he would never surrender to the "Captain of the Highwaymen" as he called Colbert.

Angered by Colbert's audacity, Commandant Du Breuil conceived a bold counterattack. Du Breuil selected a detachment of 10 soldiers and 4 Quapaw Indians to be led by Sergeant Pastor. He instructed them to yell like Indians as they rushed out to meet the firmly entrenched partisans. This unexpected sally routed the surprised attackers who, upon hearing the war-cries, believed that the entire Quapaw nation had arrived. As they retreated, Colbert's men were heard shouting: "Let's go! Let's go! The Indians are upon us."⁵ The partisans fled to their boats with the Spanish in hot pursuit. Shots from Spanish muskets killed one member of the band and wounded another. In retaliation, one of Colbert's sons pointed a musket at Lieutenant De Villars' head and pulled the trigger. Fortunately for De Villars, the weapon misfired. When one of Sergeant Pastor's Indians inched near enough to throw a tomahawk into their midst, the attackers quickly departed.⁶

At 12:00, Chief Angaska finally arrived at the fort. Du Breuil reprimanded the Quapaw for allowing the British to enter the river unchallenged. To redeem himself, Angaska left in pursuit of Colbert with 100 warriors and soldiers. The Quapaw chief overtook the raiders south of the mouth of the Arkansas. Positioning his men around the enemy camp, the bold Angaska walked directly into the midst of the enemy, demanding that Colbert release all prisoners. By telling Colbert that he was surrounded by a superior number of Quapaw warriors, Angaska gained the release of all

prisoners except four soldiers, the son of a post resident, and three slaves belonging to De Villars. These, Colbert kept to insure his safe passage back to Chickasaw country.⁷

Colbert's raid on Arkansas Post was probably the final revolutionary war engagement. Spanish casualties numbered two dead and one wounded. A total of eight persons were captured and taken to the Chickasaw country. Among the partisans, one man was killed and another wounded. Life at Arkansas Post soon returned to normal. Except for Du Breuil's request for "one cask of brandy to revive the troops,"⁸ there was little in the official records to indicate that anything had happened.

On September 3, 1783, a treaty ending the war was concluded in Paris. The United States emerged from the negotiations as an independent nation with much of its western border at the Mississippi River. Spain, largely dissatisfied by the proceedings in Paris, wished to confine the new United States of America to the eastern seaboard and the Appalachians. Now faced with a republic even more aggressive than Great Britain, Spain began a reassessment of her Louisiana policy.⁹

CHAPTER 12

SPAIN ATTEMPTS TO HOLD LOUISIANA

After the American War for Independence, Spain renewed her attempts to develop Louisiana. Official policy favored the colonization and agricultural development of the province. It was reasoned that a substantial population in Louisiana would act as a barrier to the westward movement of Americans, thus preventing their penetration of Spain's southwestern colonies. Simultaneously, Spain confronted problems in controlling contraband trade and the aggressive Osage on her western border. Hearing rumors almost daily of an impending American or French invasion, officials kept the Spanish military presence in Louisiana strong.

Following the war, an alarming number of American emigrants moved into the fertile lands west of the Appalachians. Spain hoped to check this tide of American expansion by cultivating the loyalty of Indian tribes between the Spanish and American frontiers. In 1783, Spain concluded a formal peace with the Chickasaw and Choctaw Indians. Raids by American frontiersmen against former British allies, however, displaced many other tribes who abandoned their homelands to seek refuge in Spanish territory. Spanish hospitality attracted the Delaware in 1786 and almost the entire Miami-Piankeshaw band to the Arkansas country in 1789. The presence of additional tribes under Spanish jurisdiction strengthened the barrier against American expansion and increased the volume of trade conducted at Spanish posts. Unfortunately for Spain, commercial opportunities in Arkansas also attracted large numbers of American traders.

Americans conducted illegal contraband trade with Spain's new Indian allies. Early in 1787, 20 Americans from Louisville were reportedly trading with the Delaware on the St. Francis River. To guard against the growing contraband trade, Governor Miro sent a detachment of the 6th Spanish Regiment, commanded by Captain Don Joseph Valliere, to the Arkansas. Valliere reached the post on March 31, 1787, and succeeded Du Breuil as post commandant.¹

At the time of Valliere's arrival, the village of Arkansas Post contained 119 civilians. Many were hunters who resided in the Arkansas wilds for most of the year. Permanent post residents included: Francois Menard and his father-in-law Anselme Villet; Juan Gonzalez and Ignacio Contrera, Spanish soldiers discharged from service but who remained to hunt and trade; Martin Serrano, another discharged veteran who married a widow from Arkansas Post;



Figure 21. Captain Josef Valliere, commandant at Arkansas Post from 1787-1790. Original painting owned by Mr. and Mrs. Howard Stebbins, Little Rock.

Andre Lopez, a trader from Galicia; Joseph Tessie, post interpreter; Thomas Serrano and Mateo Serra, hunting partners; Jean Baptiste Imbaut, Pierre Nittard, Pierre Picard, Jean Baptiste Cucharin, Michael Woolf, Joseph Baugy, Pierre Ragaut, Pierre Lefebvre, Henry Randall, Robert Gibson, Bayonne, Duchasin, Michel Bonne, William Nolan, and Baptiste Macon, post residents.²

On March 31, Valliere and the former commandant, Jacobo Du Breuil, made an inspection of the fort. The transfer of soldiers of the 6th Regiment had increased troop strength to 32 men. Among the artillery of the fort were two 4-pound cannon in fair condition and two 1/2-pound and five 4-ounce swivel guns in good condition. The stockade of the fort, however, was sadly in need of repair.

Valliere inherited the problem of improving the dilapidated fort. Although the location at Ecores Rouges placed the post above the level of destructive flood waters, the swift current of the Arkansas now undermined the very bank upon which the fort stood. In 1787, four rises of the river badly eroded the bank below Fort Carlos III. By the end of the year, only 18-inches of overhanging esplanade remained, forcing Commandant Valliere to remove the artillery. For reasons of safety, the captain sent his wife and child to New Orleans to live. In February, 1788, another rise of the river tore away a bastion and a month later, the stockade wall nearest the river tumbled down the bank. Little remained of Fort Carlos III, and the garrison took quarters beyond the ruined enclosure. In 1789, A spring running through the fort undermined what was left of the stockade. In spite of frequent complaints to the governor, a lack of funds delayed construction throughout the commandant's tenure at the post.³

Notwithstanding the poor state of Arkansas defenses, Commandant Valliere pursued his duties with conviction. On March 12, 1788, four soldiers deserted the garrison at Arkansas Post to join the Americans trading illegally with the Delaware on the St. Francis River. The great profits that could be reaped in the fur trade enticed many soldiers who earned only \$6-\$9 per month. Commandant Valliere resolved to capture the deserters and expel the troublesome smugglers. Valliere mounted an expedition. A file of soldiers approached the American camp by land while a naval force of Indians under the leadership of Interpreter Joseph Tessie approached on the river. Perhaps warned of Valliere's plans, the Americans had abandoned their camp. The expedition led to no beneficial conclusions for the Spanish and incurred expenses that the governor considered exorbitant. Citizens in the militia earned soldiers pay for

time served. Hereinafter, the overzealous Valliere was cautioned, let the Indians control American trespassers.

The post merchants were angered that the Americans had effectively stolen the Delaware commerce. In retaliation a prominent post trader, Francois Menard, instigated ill-feelings between the Quapaw and Delaware. Menard suggested to the Quapaw that the contraband goods the Delaware received from the Americans were superior to Spanish goods. Before trouble could develop, Valliere had the man put in the public stocks, sending him with the next available convoy to New Orleans for trial.⁴

Even more serious than the troublesome American traders, Spain constantly feared an American military invasion. In February, 1788, Governor Miro suspected an invasion from the Tennessee area. He reinforced the Arkansas garrison with a sergeant and 12 additional soldiers. One half of the detachment established an outpost on an island in the Mississippi to watch for the invading army. The other half quartered at Arkansas Post and relieved the outpost every 15 days. The expected invasion never materialized, however, and the outpost proved to be nothing more than an unnecessary expense.

In 1790, a transfer of command placed Captain Juan Ignace Delino de Chalmette in charge of the Arkansas garrison. At his arrival on July 20, the new commandant must have been dismayed to find no trace of Fort Carlos III. The fort had long since surrendered to the Arkansas River. The 30 man garrison De Chalmette commanded was quartered in temporary barracks without a stockade.

Soon after De Chalmette assumed command, the citizens of the post presented him with a memorial requesting "a little fort" to protect us from "various Indian tribes who incessantly molest us."⁵ The inhabitants generously offered to supply stakes for the new stockade. De Chalmette purveyed this most recent request to the Governor and on January 20, 1791, permission to construct a new fort was granted, provided the cost of the new work did not exceed \$1,500.

Commandant De Chalmette selected a location for the new fort next to the habitant's fields and within a "cannon shot" of the village. By March 1, 1792, the captain took possession of the fort, naming it San Esteban after the governor's given name. The new works included a house, barracks for 50 men, and a warehouse. For protection against the Indians, a stockade was constructed of white oak stakes arranged in a square with two opposing bastions at opposite corners. Four 6-pound cannon and 2 swivel guns

were mounted in the bastions. The nearby habitant village contained about 30 houses of the French style with full galleries and shingle-covered exteriors. The houses were set along two streets. Below the fort were the habitant's fields, 44x44 feet in size, where "beautiful fields of wheat" were maintained.⁶

The civilians of Arkansas Post were relieved that a fort protected their community once again. A year after the treaty of 1777, the Osage resumed aggressions against the Spanish. In 1787, hunters found two men and a woman murdered by Osage on the Arkansas River. Several hunters' camps along the river were burned. One demoralized post habitant commented that "we are robbed by the Osages not only of the products of the hunt but even of our shirts." Angered by continued Osage harassment, Governor Baron de Carondelet declared war on that tribe in May, 1793. Following official orders, De Chalmette mounted a force of 50 to 60 white hunters and 150 Quapaw to march against the Osage. The inhabitants were determined "to punish the Osages for their cruelty towards [them]." Before the expedition could be launched, however, another threat of an American invasion compelled the governor to abandon the punitive expedition and seek more peaceful means of reaching a truce. The Osage continued to be troublesome to the Spanish throughout the remainder of their Louisiana occupation.⁷

In 1793, war between Spain and the new French republic began. Officials feared that the revolution would spread to Louisiana or that a French invasion would occur. Later in the year, Spanish officials learned that Edmond Genet, citizen of the French republic, and American General George Rogers Clark planned to invade Louisiana. In response to this threat, De Chalmette called out the Arkansas militia. Governor Carondelet believed that the Arkansas fort was little more than "a circle of stakes" and hardly worth defending. He denounced De Chalmette's action as wasteful and informed the commandant that in the face of a superior invasion force he should abandon the post and retire to Los Nogales, present-day Vicksburg. Perhaps because of his excessive response to the invasion rumor, De Chalmette was relieved of command.⁸

On July 11, 1794, Captain Carlos de Villemont replaced De Chalmette as commandant of Arkansas Post. De Villemont was 27 when he assumed command. The young officer impressed Spanish officials and soon earned the respect and admiration of the post residents. It has been said of De Villemont that "he united an almost princely sauvity [sic] of manners with a character that was without blemish." De Villemont served as commandant of Arkansas Post for eight years,

longer than any other officer. In 1800, he married a local woman and raised six children at Arkansas Post. Following his retirement in 1802, the former commandant spent the remainder of his years on the Arkansas.⁹

The threat of an American invasion continued to alarm Louisiana officials. On July 22, 1795, Spain responded by ceding its claims to the east bank of the Mississippi between the mouth of the Yazoo and the 31st parallel to the United States. The loss of several strongholds east of the Mississippi compromised Spanish defenses and did nothing to appease American desire for land. Forced to reassess their Louisiana policy, Spanish officials decided that the best way to diffuse an American invasion was to populate the province with settlers. Ironically, because Spanish subjects preferred to settle elsewhere, Louisiana officials had to rely on Americans--the very people she sought to exclude--to settle in Louisiana. The governor instructed Commandant De Villemont to invite Americans from Vincennes and Detroit to settle in Arkansas.¹⁰

The Spanish government was careful to select industrious pioneers to settle in Louisiana. Two such men were the brothers Elisha and Gabriel Winter. Sometime between 1790 and 1798, the Winters traveled to New Orleans and established a business making cotton rope. As recompense for introducing a manufacture into the province, the men received a tract of one million arpents (1 arpent=11 square feet) on the Arkansas River. The Winters invited Joseph Stillwell, a revolutionary war veteran homesteading in Kentucky, to emigrate to Arkansas with them. In 1798, Elisha and Gabriel Winters, a third brother named William, and Joseph Stillwell settled on their grant in Arkansas. Other American settlers homesteading in the same year included William Hubble, William Russell, Walter Carr and three brothers named Samuel, Richard and John Price. Pierre Massieres, whose contraband goods Jacobo Du Breuil once confiscated, settled at the post and became a respectable merchant.¹¹

The success of Spanish policy in Louisiana was never tested. Ultimately, the province proved to be too great an economic burden for Spain. In 1800, the treaty of San Ildefonso was concluded by which Spain retroceded Louisiana to France in exchange for the Duchy of Parma in Italy. France, however, never took formal possession of the province. In 1803, the United States purchased Louisiana from Napoleon Bonaparte, emperor of France, for the sum of fifteen-million dollars. On December 20, Louisiana was formally transferred to the United States. One month later, the Spanish commandant transferred the fort on the Arkansas to United States representative, Lieutenant James B. Many.

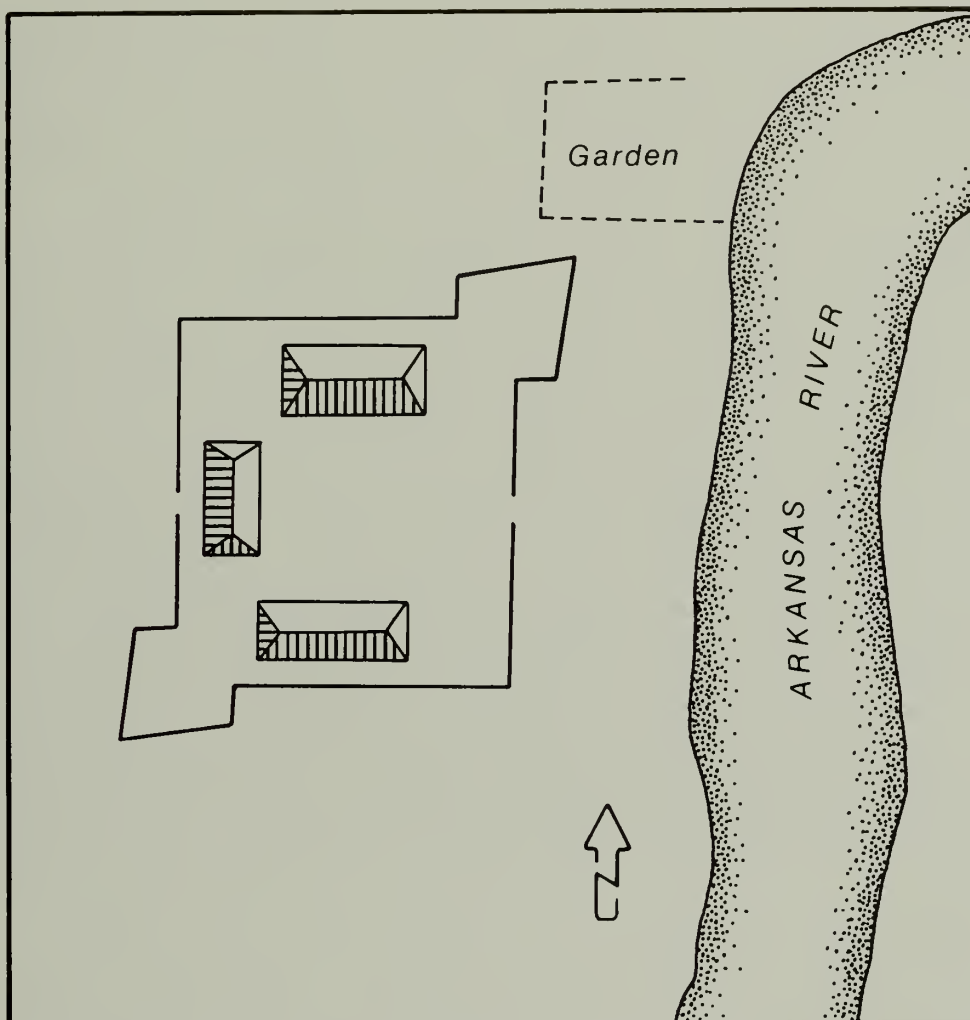


Figure 22. Fort San Esteban. Constructed by the Spanish in 1792, Fort San Esteban was regarrisoned by American troops in 1804 and thereafter called Fort Madison. After an 1806 sketch by John B. Treat.

As with any change of command, both men prepared an inventory of the fort that listed a barracks, kitchen store house, earthen oven, three sentry boxes, and one flag-staff. The fort was regarrisoned with 16 American troops and thereafter called Fort Madison.¹²

Under Spanish jurisdiction, Arkansas Post served as one link in the Spanish frontier barrier designed to prevent Anglo-American penetration into rich Mexico. Her isolationist policy enticed Spain to enter the American War for Independence on behalf of the Patriots. Spanish officials reasoned that, with American autonomy, British pressure on the eastern border of New Spain would end. The Patriots won their freedom but, unfortunately for Spain, the new United States proved to be more aggressive than Great Britain. The tiny garrison on the Arkansas, like other isolated Spanish posts, was ill-equipped and understaffed. Arkansas Post could not keep Americans from trespassing on Spanish lands. To rectify this problem and strengthen the frontier barrier, Spanish officials proposed to settle Louisiana with agricultural families. If Louisiana were already settled, thought the Spaniards, there would be little reason for Americans to move west. Because Spanish subjects preferred to settle elsewhere, however, Spain eventually invited Americans--the very people she sought to exclude--to populate the province. This same policy, some thirty years later, would lose Texas for Mexico. In reality, Spanish policy in Louisiana was never tested. For reasons of economy, Spain entered a transaction with France that eventually placed Louisiana in the hands of the United States. With the extension of American control over the interior of the continent, peace came to the new frontier and westward immigration continued.

CHAPTER 13

LOUISIANA AS AN AMERICAN POSSESSION

At first, little tangible change occurred with the American occupation of Louisiana. Arkansas began its economic life with the fur trade and passed only gradually through this phase. The United States assumed the role of trading with Indians west of the Mississippi, and for this purpose, a government trading house or factory was established at Arkansas Post.

In 1805, John B. Treat, newly appointed government factor, traveled to Arkansas Post. Treat found a small community of about 120 habitants of French and Spanish extraction. The village included approximately 20 houses neatly arranged along 2 streets. Fort Madison, situated on a nearby hill, contained a small garrison commanded by Lieutenant Many. A few American farmers had settled their families in the vicinity of the post and cultivated the rich Arkansas bottomlands. The older habitants followed their traditional pursuits--hunting and trading with the Indians.¹

Treat hoped to have the factory operating within the year. As a temporary measure, the merchandise Treat brought with him was stored in the garrison. After searching for a suitable factory building, Treat eventually purchased a two-story log house in the vicinity of the fort. The lower floor of the building was dark and cool, ideal conditions for a "skin room." In the spring of 1806, the factor began construction of additional buildings including a house to accommodate visiting Indians. In the fall of the year, the factory doors opened for business.

Almost from the beginning, the government factory was doomed. At first, Treat's inexperience as a trader hampered factory operations. He had no formal business training or knowledge of handling skins. Many of Treat's bundles of furs were poorly packed and arrived in New Orleans rotten and infested with worms. Black market trading remained a problem and captured much of the factors' business. In 1806, Treat complained that "we have been deprived of considerable quantity of furs, carried from the White River by illicit traders."²

Treat faced even stiffer competition from licensed traders at Arkansas Post. These original French and Spanish merchants had conducted business with the Indians for years and strongly resented any competition from the United States government. Treat commented that "every Inhabitant, who could be considered a Trader has and still continued every



Figure 23. Making a bundle of furs with a wedge press. Improperly packaged, skins soon became infested with worms rendering them useful only to the glue maker. Original housed at the Jefferson National Expansion Memorial, St. Louis.

exertion to oppose us--a meeting has been held for the purpose of devising means the most efficaceous to prevent our success."³

The House of Bright and Morgan, a local trading firm, proved to be Treat's most serious competitor. This company managed to secure a trade monopoly with the Osage from the Secretary of War. The increased volume of trade for the House of Bright and Morgan allowed them to slash prices at Arkansas Post and undersell all other competitors. Treat complained bitterly. From a total of 975 packs of deer skins shipped from Arkansas Post in 1806, 267 belonged to Bright and Morgan while only 61 were owned by the government factory. Between 1806-1808, the Quapaw traded only 10 packs of skins at the factory. Treat's returns reflected a steady decline. In 1810, no longer able to justify expenses, the factory at Arkansas Post closed its doors for good.⁴

CHAPTER 14

ARKANSAS POST, TERRITORIAL CAPITAL

Demise of the government factory heralded a new economic era at Arkansas Post. An agricultural economy slowly supplanted the waning fur trade. Since 1804, American farmers had been trickling into the region. In 1812, war with Britain sent many displaced Americans west of the Mississippi. To administer the increased population, Arkansas County was created on December 31, 1813, encompassing much of the present state of Arkansas with the county seat at Arkansas Post. The county was administered by the Territory of Missouri. In January, 1815, the battle of New Orleans ended the war with Britain giving yet additional impulse to westward emigration.¹

Because of the influx of farming families, life at Arkansas Post changed considerably. In 1817, an emigrant stated that most inhabitants had "given up this mode of life [hunting] for the cultivation of land."² Instead of dealing in pelts, post merchants now catered to farmers. Eli J. Lewis, William Drope, and Frederic Notrebe transacted nearly all the post business.³ The village of Arkansas Post now boasted a mill and one hotel. Several Americans joined the French and Spanish to live in the village. The number of civilian residents now totaled nearly two-hundred, larger than any other time during the existence of Arkansas Post.

The residents of Arkansas County grew increasingly dissatisfied with their citizenship in the Missouri Territory. Public improvements and other benefits resulting from territorial organization eluded Arkansas County. In a number of public meetings held at Arkansas Post, the residents of Arkansas County drafted petitions to Congress, urging that their county be separated from Missouri and made a self-governing body. By an act of Congress on March 2, 1819, Arkansas became a territory with the capital at Arkansas Post. The territorial government included a governor, secretary, a general assembly composed of a house of representatives, and an upper house called a council. The highest court included a superior court of three appointed judges. President James Monroe filled the most important offices. He appointed Brigadier General James Miller as governor; Robert Crittenden as secretary; and Andrew Scott, Charles Jouett, and Robert Fetcher as judges for the superior court.⁴

James Miller was born April 25, 1776, at Petersborough, New Hampshire. The young Miller was educated for the bar,

but in 1808, entered the army as a major. During the War of 1812, Miller distinguished himself as a leader and rose quickly through the ranks. In August, 1812, he was breveted colonel for meritorious service at Brownstown. Two years later, Miller was promoted to brigadier general for his heroic action at Lundy's Lane. In this encounter, Miller was asked to lead a company of soldiers in an assault on a battery of British guns that had been dealing destruction to American lines. Colonel Miller replied "I'll try, sir." Miller's company advanced and after a short, desperate contest, captured the battery. Miller became an instant hero, and the modest phrase he coined was on the lips of every American. Further feats of daring at Chippewa, Niagara, and Fort Erie won the general a medal from Congress. Miller resigned from the Service on June 1, 1819, when he was offered the governorship of Arkansas Territory.⁵

On October 17, 1819, the war hero began his journey to Arkansas Territory. The trip was agonizingly slow, taking a total of 75 days after departing Pittsburgh. Miller stopped at nearly every river town to be cheered by admiring crowds eager to see the hero who coined the memorable words "I'll try, sir." Miller's grand arrival at Arkansas Post was described by a citizen:

He came up the river in a splendidly fitted-up barge with a large and well finished cabin, having most of the conveniences of modern steamboats. On the after part of the cabin, on both sides, her name, "Arkansaw," [sic] was inscribed in large gilt letters. She had a tall mast, from which floated a national banner with the word "Arkansaw" [sic] in large letters in the center, and the words "I'll try sir!" . . . interspersed in several places.⁶

In the absence of the tardy governor, Secretary Robert Crittenden set the wheels of government in motion. At the first session of the territorial legislature, July 28-August 3, Acting Governor Crittenden held elections for the general assembly and filled the most important appointive offices. Governor Miller, upon his arrival, questioned the legality of these elections and called for a special session of the legislature. The legislature reconvened from February 7-10, 1820. Predictably the members unanimously supported their election to office. Other issues discussed during the second session included adoption of a code of laws for the territory, selling public land, road building, making treaties with Indians residing in the territory, and passing a pre-emption law.⁷

The village on the Arkansas prospered as the territorial capital. Just prior to territorial



Southern Types—A Southern Plough Team.

Figure 24. A typical American farmer. American farmers gradually replaced French trappers. From *The Great South* by Edward King.



Figure 25. James Miller, Arkansas' first territorial governor. From Pictorial History of Arkansas by Faye Hempstead.



Figure 26. Secretary of the territory, Robert Crittenden. Crittenden set the wheels of government in motion during Governor Miller's absence. From Pictorial History of Arkansas by Faye Hempstead.

organization, British naturalist Thomas Nuttall visited Arkansas Post and described it as "an insignificant village [that] scarcely deserved geographic notice." On January 15, 1820, Nuttall stopped at Arkansas Post for a second time and found an entirely different community:

Interest, curiosity, and speculation, had drawn the attention of men of education and wealth toward this country. Since its separation into a territory; we now see an additional number of lawyers, doctors, and mechanics. The retinue and friends of the Governor together with the officers of justice, added also essential importance to the territory, as well as the growing town.⁸

Following creation of the territory, Arkansas Post assumed the appearance of an established community. Early businesses included three general stores, William Montgomery's tavern, two tailor shops, a post office, Samuel Wilson's blacksmith shop, Francis Vaugine's billiard parlor, a mill, and two cotton factors.⁹ A hoard of lawyers descended on the fledgling capital and opened offices. On October 30, 1819, pioneer journalist William Woodruff set-up a printing press at Arkansas Post.

Woodruff was 23 years old when he came to Arkansas. In appearance, he was a "short man, clean-shaven, with a fine forehead, thin, dark-auburn hair, piercing dark eyes and a reserved manner." To all who knew him, Woodruff was an educated man "of the highest kind of honesty and downright and thorough sincerity."¹⁰ The young publisher learned the printing trade in Brooklyn, New York, and moved around for several years looking for a suitable place to practice his profession. When he heard that Arkansas Territory had been established, the enterprising Woodruff purchased a Ramage printing press, some type, and other supplies and headed for Arkansas Post. The printing press was transported upriver in a bateaux a small raft made by lashing two pirogues or wooden dugout canoes together. Woodruff built a two-room log cabin at Arkansas Post, and on November 20, 1819, published the first issue of the Arkansas Gazette. In his first editorial, Woodruff wrote:

It has long been the wish of many citizens of this territory that a press should be established here; their wish is now accomplished; we have established one--which we intend shall be permanent and increase with the growth of the territory.¹¹

Civilization had at last come to Arkansas. So overjoyed were the inhabitants that the community celebrated



Figure 27. Pioneer journalist William Woodruff. Woodruff published the first issue of the Arkansas Gazette at Arkansas Post on Nov. 20, 1819. Arkansas History Commission.



Figure 28. Arkansas Post as the territorial capital.

the first publication of the Arkansas Gazette with a barrel of whiskey donated by a merchant.

With the presence of public officials and lawyers in the community, all of whom rented space for living quarters and offices, land values soared. Many part-time lawyers engaged in land speculation. In 1818, the Town of Rome, adjoining Arkansas Post, was platted by William Russell, a lawyer. Russell divided the town into 44-consecutively numbered lots, 2 of which were set aside as sites for public buildings. He hoped Rome would become the new county seat. In anticipation, many residents bought lots as an investment. In 1819, William O. Allen, also a lawyer, platted the Town of Arkansas adjoining Rome. Post residents were so certain of the future of Arkansas, that a board of trustees was elected for the newly platted town.¹²

Arkansas Post had become an American community. Yet among most of the original French inhabitants ran a strong current of resentment. Few liked Americans and still fewer liked the American form of government. Washington Irving visited Arkansas Post and observed that the French detest Americans because they "trouble themselves with cares beyond their horizon and impart sorrow thro the newspapers from every point of the compass." Around 1820, many of the French departed Arkansas Post, moving upriver to Jefferson County. Some created the town of New Gascony. A few French habitants were assimilated into American society, however, as evidenced by a sprinkling of French surnames among the village tax rolls. In 1832, Father Saulnier visited Arkansas Post to conduct a Christmas Eve mass. He could muster only 50 people to attend the services. These, he described as "very indifferent and ignorant; they had forgotten nearly everything."¹³

With the establishment of the territorial capital at Arkansas Post, the tiny community turned into a bustling American frontier town almost overnight. An influx of lawyers, merchants, and mechanics all but swamped existing facilities. To the conservative French, these newcomers seemed brash and fiercely independent. Such qualities, imparted to American politics, created an atmosphere that could only be described as tempestuous. In early territorial politics, factionalism and prejudice ruled the day. Sometimes, disputes were settled on the field of honor. In 1820, a duel between William O. Allen and Robert C. Oden--the first of its kind in Arkansas--was fought at Arkansas Post.

CHAPTER 15

ALLEN/ODEN DUEL

William O. Allen was a lawyer at Arkansas Post. Experienced in military affairs and an old acquaintance of Governor Miller, Allen was appointed brigadier general of the Arkansas militia. He commanded a position of respect within the community. Robert C. Oden, also a lawyer at the post, was a devoted friend of Allen's, that is until early March, 1820, when both men became embroiled in a bitter argument. Although the exact reason for the altercation is unknown, it was probably a political matter. Allen had only recently delivered a particularly stirring speech to the territorial legislature. Consequently, Allen challenged Oden to a duel.

At sunrise on March 10, 1820, the combatants met on an island in the Arkansas River. Allen brought George W. Scott and Elijah Morton as seconds. A crowd of onlookers watched with interest. Following the established code of duelling, both men stood back-to-back, pistols in hand. The crowd became silent. A duly appointed official began counting-down--10 definite, measured steps separated the men--they turned to face each other. Allen claimed the first shot. With deadly aim, he directed the pistol at Oden's heart. In a split-second, the hammer on Allen's weapon snapped forward sending a shower of sparks into the primed pan--the powder ignited in a puff of smoke--a deafening roar shattered the silence. The ball from Allen's pistol struck a button on Oden's coat. As he fell, almost convulsively, Oden squeezed the trigger. A wild shot from his weapon somehow found its mark, striking Allen in the forehead. Allen slumped to the ground, dead in an instant. Miraculously, Oden survived.

News of the duel spread like wild-fire through the village of Arkansas Post. Everyone mourned the loss of Allen and prayed for Oden's recovery. Woodruff denounced the affair and in the next issue of the Arkansas Gazette described duelling as "a practice . . . which has been universally condemned by every philanthropic mind."¹

As a result of the Allen-Oden affair, the territorial legislature outlawed the practice of duelling. Duelling in Arkansas, however, only increased and became a recurring theme in territorial politics. To escape legal repercussions, combatants merely met on a neutral island or river bank beyond the pale of justice. To Arkansas Post, the Allen-Oden duel led to one beneficial conclusion. On March 31, 1820, Allen's sister traveled to Arkansas Post to

settle her brother's estate. Her transportation, the steamboat Comet, became the first such vessel to reach Arkansas Post and, consequently, opened the Arkansas River for steam navigation.

CHAPTER 16

THE TERRITORIAL CAPITAL RELOCATED

On October 2, 1820, the territorial legislature reconvened. The most prominent issues considered during the session included issuance of territorial scrip, the problem of horse theft by Indians, and relocation of the territorial capital. One official cited the remoteness and unhealthiness of Arkansas Post as the most serious objections. The legislature advocated moving the capital "to some place higher up the river." The favored location was Little Rock, an undeveloped town site on which William Russell, an influential land speculator, held a claim. Russell astutely offered lots to prominent politicians for a nominal fee. During the legislative recess, Secretary Crittenden, William Trimble, Robert C. Oden, and Joseph C. Hardin (speaker of the house) all purchased lots in Little Rock. By an act of the territorial legislature on October 18, 1820, the capital was officially relocated at Little Rock with all sessions of the legislature to be held there after June 1, 1821.¹

The relocation devastated the economy of Arkansas Post. Government officials and lawyers departed as did William Woodruff with his printing press. Because of this population exodus, land values slumped, and many landowners were unable to pay taxes. The towns of Arkansas and Rome, platted in a fever of speculation, were never fully developed. Following relocation of the territorial capital, the famed naturalist John James Audubon, visited Arkansas Post. He found "now a poor, Nearly [sic] deserted village . . . at present, the decrepid [sic] Visages [sic] of the Worn [sic] out Indian Traders [sic] and a few American families are all that gives it life."²

CHAPTER 17

ARKANSAS POST, COTTON CENTER

Following relocation of the territorial capital, Arkansas Post emerged as a center of the Arkansas cotton trade. Several important events contributed to this economic resurgence including the advent of steamboat transportation, the ready availability of prime agricultural land, and slave labor.

Commanding superior speed and capable of transporting a greater pay-load, the steamboat soon replaced the flatboat and keelboat. On March 31, 1820, Comet became the first steamboat to reach Arkansas Post, and opened the Arkansas River for steam navigation. Upriver establishments like Dwight Mission and the army garrisons at Fort Smith and Fort Gibson created a ready market for supplies, and ensured the continued presence of steamboats on the river. In January, 1821, Comet made a second trip to Arkansas Post followed by Eagle, another steamboat, three months later. A new era of transportation emerged for Arkansas.¹

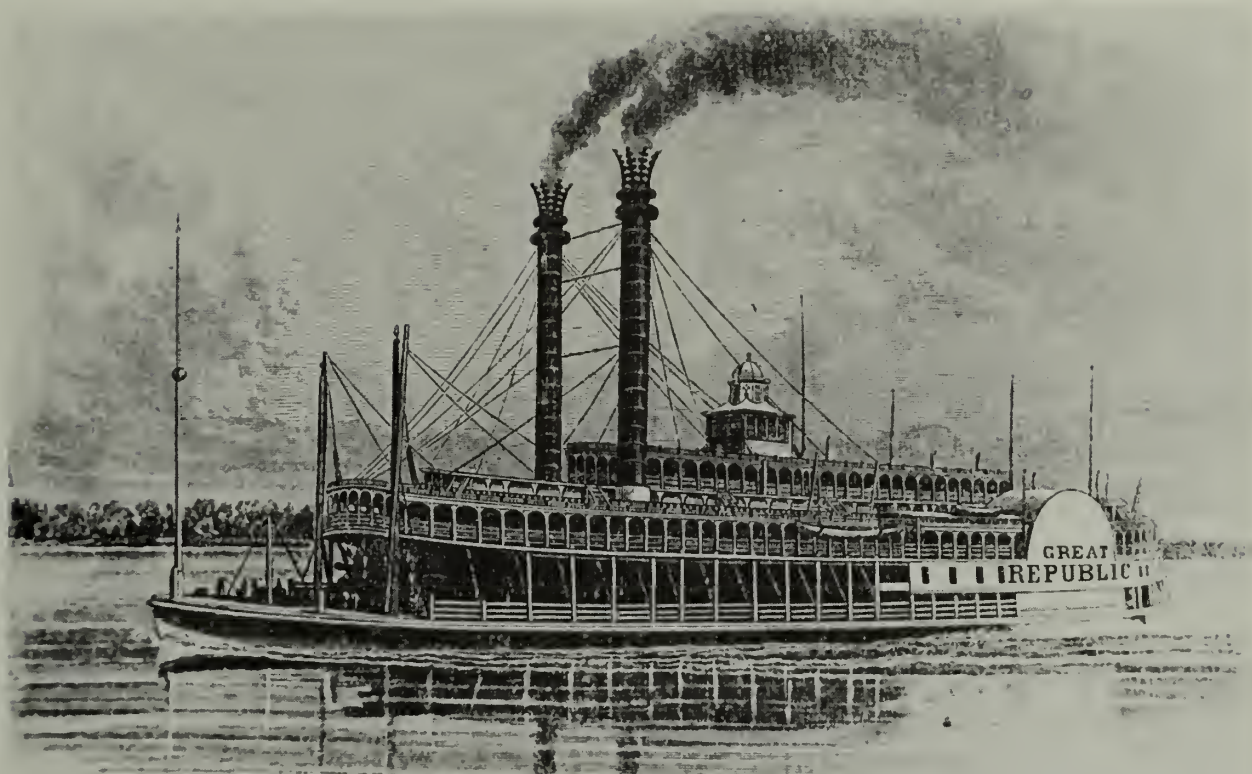
With enhanced access to New Orleans markets, prices of merchandise at Arkansas Post dropped overnight. The demand for farm produce shipped to New Orleans increased markedly, and commercial agriculture soon replaced subsistence farming. On November 15, 1824, the Quapaw ceded their remaining tribal lands, some of the richest agricultural land in the territory. The Quapaw had ceded the majority of their tribal holdings in 1818.²

Cotton, the staple crop of the south, gained prominence in Arkansas as did slave labor. The term, "planter," emerged in the local vocabulary. By 1830, cotton dominated the agricultural news of the territory to the near exclusion of other crops. Arkansas Post, abandoned as the territorial capital, emerged as a center of the cotton trade. One resident commented that: "Our little town is all in a bustle. Cotton, the great staple of our country, is crowding in from every quarter. Boats arrive every day at our landing, with the rich production of the climate."^E At least some indication of this increased prosperity was evident in 1832 when a traveler commented that in addition to the older French houses, a few modern buildings adorned the bank of the river, "among them two brickhouses, one of which was the store and warehouse of the opulent Frederic Notrebe."³

Frederic Notrebe was a wealthy planter and the most prominent resident of Arkansas Post. G.W. Featherstonhaugh



Figure 29. Transportation on the Arkansas River. Supplies were shipped to Arkansas Post by the flatboat and keelboat.



The Steamer "Great Republic," a Mississippi River Boat

Figure 30. A typical Mississippi River boat. These steam powered ships soon replaced the slower flatboats and keelboats. The first steamboat to land at Arkansas Post arrived on March 31, 1820. From The Great South by Edward King.

described him as "the great man of the place [Arkansas Post]." Notrebe was born in France in 1780. After serving in Napoleon's army he emigrated to the United States in 1809. He was 29 years old at the time. Notrebe traveled to Arkansas Post and opened a trading house. The enterprise was successful for in 1811, he purchased a lot in town and married Mary Felicite Bellette. Notrebe soon opened a dry-goods store adjacent to his house and catered to the agricultural community. In 1819, he expanded his business to include marketing cotton. When others joined the rush to Little Rock, Notrebe remained, reinvested his profits in land and became a planter. In 1827, Notrebe built a cotton gin. By 1836, the industrious planter owned 14 parcels of land totaling 3,496 acres. In partnership with his son-in-law, William Cummins, Notrebe owned another 4,633 acres. A total of 71 slaves worked his plantations.⁴

"Colonel Notrebe" as he was respectfully called, conducted a large volume of business through his store and cotton gin. He was keenly aware of the shortage of currency in the territory and often conducted business by barter. When Arkansas acquired statehood in 1836, Notrebe labored to establish a branch of the new state bank at Arkansas Post. His efforts were successful. In 1839, a branch of the state bank was established at Arkansas Post on a lot that Notrebe donated. In 1840-1841, a permanent brick building was erected to house the bank at a cost of \$15,761.29.⁵

The economic prosperity that Arkansas Post enjoyed during the 1830s soon came to an end. The Arkansas Post branch of the state bank, with outstanding loans worth \$91,900, suspended specie payment. An inability to sell state bonds for required capital caused the financial difficulties. In 1843, the Arkansas state legislature passed an act liquidating the entire state bank system. In later years, the costly bank building at Arkansas Post was used to stable horses.⁶

In 1855, a new site at DeWitt, 20 miles north of Arkansas Post, was chosen for the seat of Arkansas County. Arkansas Post languished. In 1856, one traveler commented that "The town at the Post of Arkansas has gone to decay but a few remaining, the County Seat having been removed."⁷

The first half of the nineteenth century brought many changes to Arkansas Post. The sleepy French village awakened as a lively frontier town. Within a few years, economic emphasis shifted from the Indian trade to agriculture. With the availability of large tracts of prime agricultural land, steamboat transportation, and cheap slave labor, cotton gained a foothold in Arkansas. By 1830, cotton was king and Arkansas was a thoroughly southern



Figure 31. Working on the plantation. With the support of slave labor, Arkansas Post became a center of cotton production. From The Great South by Edward King.



Figure 32. A steamboat transporting cotton. Steam-boats laden with cotton bales were a typical sight at Arkansas Post. From The Great South by Edward King.

state. Nowhere was the impact of cotton production felt more than at Arkansas Post. The town became a major river port and center of cotton production. The decade of the 1860s, however, wrought drastic changes in Arkansas and at Arkansas Post.

CHAPTER 18

ARKANSAS POST, CONFEDERATE STRONGHOLD

Civil War came abruptly with the Confederate attack on Fort Sumter on April 12, 1861. In Arkansas, state troops seized Fort Smith and the federal arsenal at Little Rock, thus securing the state for the Confederacy. In May, 1861, Arkansas formally joined the Confederate States of America.

In early July, 1862, Federal troops advanced by way of Bartlesville and occupied Helena in eastern Arkansas. Northern gunboats patrolled the Mississippi south of Memphis, and menaced the eastern border of the state. On June 17, Union forces attacked and captured a Confederate battery at St. Charles on the White River.¹ Major General Theophilus H. Holmes, then commander of the trans-Mississippi West, feared additional incursions up Arkansas' rivers, perhaps to the capital at Little Rock. To guard against such an invasion Holmes placed Colonel John W. Dunnington of the Confederate States Navy in charge of river defense. Dunnington conceived a plan to construct defensive earthworks at strategic points along the interior rivers. He planned one earthwork Arkansas Post.

Dunnington, himself, was charged with the task of building a fort on the Arkansas River. He selected Arkansas Post for the same reasons as had French and Spanish engineers before him. The site was on a prominent bank on the north side of the river commanding a view of its course for a full mile in either direction. Since Arkansas Post was located above the cut-off where the White River joined the Arkansas, Federal gunboats could not advance to Little Rock unchallenged. To assist in the construction of the fort, Dunnington was given the aid of two engineers: Captains Robert H. Fitzhugh and A.M. Williams. Clarkson's company of sappers and miners and gangs of impressed slaves provided the labor. Before the end of the year, a fort once again protected the Arkansas.

"Post of Arkansas," as the Confederates called their fort, formed a hollow square, 190 feet to a side with a bastion at each corner. A ditch, 20 feet wide and 8 feet deep surrounded it. On the interior slope of the parapet, a firing step was constructed for use by the infantry. Casemates, solidly built of oak timbers reinforced with railroad iron, were situated in the two bastions fronting the river. Four 10-pounder Parrott rifles, four 6-pounder smoothbores, and three 9-inch columbiads comprised the armaments of the fort. To further add to the Confederate's

defensive capabilities, a line of piles was driven along the south side of the Arkansas River, directing all traffic within close range of the big guns. As a safeguard against a land attack, three lines of rifle-pits were excavated.

On December 10, 1862, Confederate Brigadier General Thomas J. Churchill was placed in command of Arkansas Post. He had approximately five-thousand soldiers at his disposal. Colonel Dunnington, with 35 crewmen from the Confederate ram Ponchartrain, commanded the artillery of the fort. Colonel Charles L. Dawson's 19th Arkansas Infantry Regiment and Lieutenant Colonel William A. Crawford's Arkansas Infantry Battalion manned the earthworks. For defense against a land assault, Colonel Robert R. Garland and a brigade composed of the 6th Texas Infantry, the 24th and 25th Texas (dismounted) Cavalry Regiments, Denson's Company of Louisiana Cavalry, and Hart's Arkansas Battery were bivouacked nearby. Sometime later, the 10th Texas Infantry and the 15th, 17th, and 18th Texas (dismounted) Cavalry Regiments commanded by Colonel James Deshler augmented the garrison.

While guarding the river approach to Little Rock, the enterprising Churchill raided Federal river traffic from his Arkansas stronghold. Confederate detachments lurked at the mouth of the White and Arkansas rivers, striking Federal supply boats as they passed between Memphis, Helena, and Milliken's Bend, General William T. Sherman's base of operations to support his late December attack on Vicksburg. The steamer Blue Wing, laden with ordnance stores bound for Milliken's Bend, was attacked. Unprotected, the vulnerable vessel surrendered. Confederate soldiers escorted their prize upriver to Arkansas Post where Blue Wing's ordnance became a welcome addition to Churchill's depleted magazines.²

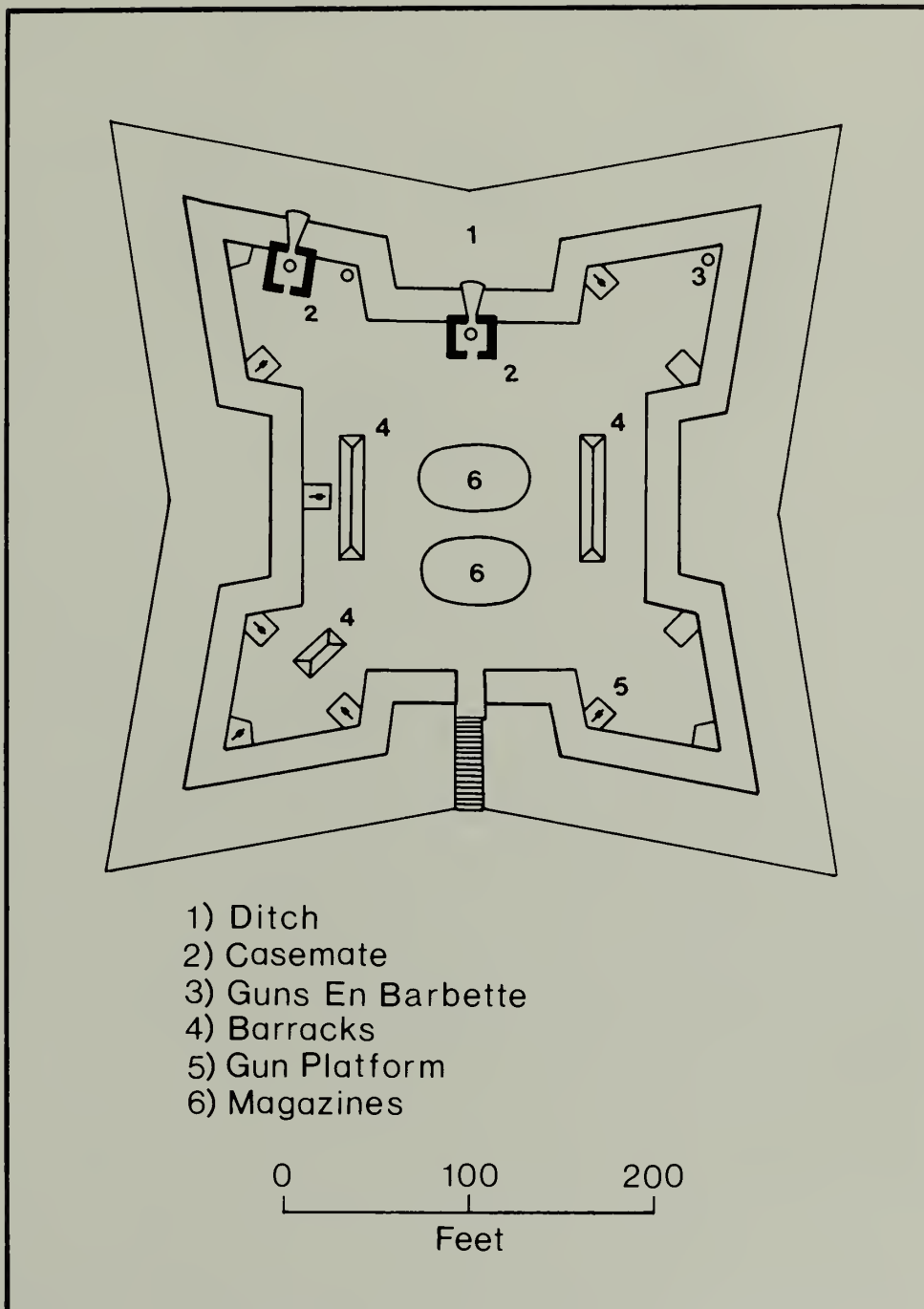


Figure 33. Post of Arkansas. Plan of the Confederate earthwork at Arkansas Post.



Figure 34. Confederate Brigadier General Thomas J. Churchill commander of Post of Arkansas. The Arkansas History Commission.

CHAPTER 19

THE BATTLE OF ARKANSAS POST

Alarmed by Confederate activities on the Mississippi, General John A. McClernand expressed his concern to President Abraham Lincoln. Although an influential politician from Illinois, McClernand was abrasive, disliked West-Pointers, and to the consternation of his peers, was overly ambitious. McClernand was, however, a fearless man. His vigor and bravery in battle won him the support of President Lincoln. In October, 1862, Lincoln authorized the politician-general to raise a large force for a down-river expedition.¹

McClernand soon arrived at Milliken's Bend brandishing orders giving him command of 32,000 troops stationed there. The politician-general knew of Blue Wing's fate and realized the threat that Confederate troops posed to Federal communication lines. McClernand decided to divert the troops idle at Milliken's Bend, following their repulse at Chickasaw Bayou near Vicksburg, and capture the Post of Arkansas. To the ambitious McClernand, Arkansas Post was a "boot of the right size."²

McClernand reorganized the entire force, calling it the "Army of the Mississippi." The glory-hunting general divided his army into two divisions--the XIII Corps to be commanded by Brigadier General George W. Morgan, and the XV Corps by William T. Sherman. Each corps had two divisions. Brigadier Generals Peter J. Osterhaus and Andrew J. Smith commanded XIII Corps divisions while Brigadier Generals Frederick Steele and David Stuart led the XV Corps divisions. McClernand knew that he would need the help of the navy if his bold undertaking was to be successful. For this he enlisted the aid of Rear Admiral David D. Porter.

On January 5, 1863, 32,000 Union troops on board 60 steamers departed Milliken's Bend with three of Porter's mighty ironclads and a number of lighter tinclad boats. Three days later the fleet steamed past the mouth of the Arkansas River as a deceptive measure and entered the White River. Twenty miles upriver the fleet crossed over to the Arkansas through the old cut-off channel, and approached Arkansas Post.

The Confederates at Post of Arkansas expected an eventual assault against them but never by a force of this magnitude. Late in the afternoon of January 9, a "round eyed" courier reported to General Churchill that "half the yankees in the west" were coming.³ The surprised general

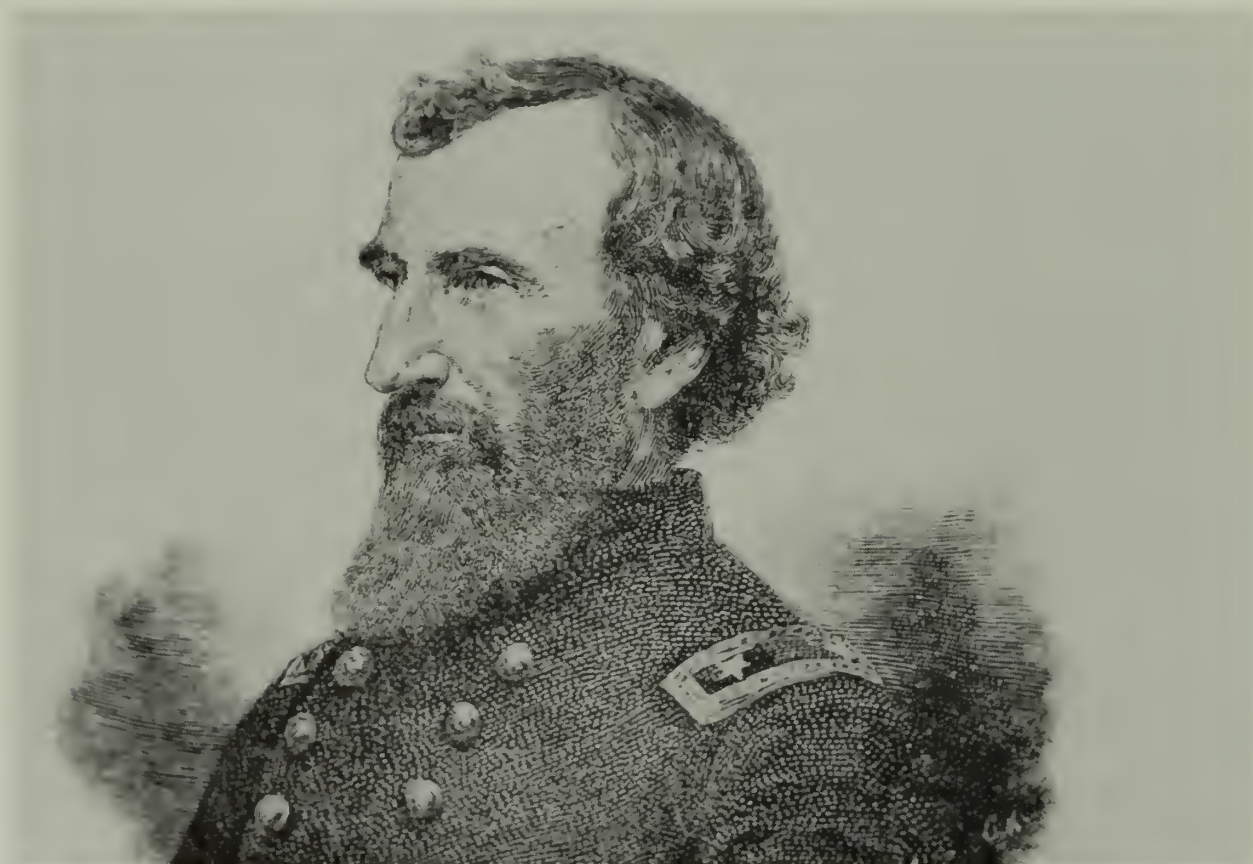


Figure 35. Northern General John A. McClernand. A brash glory-hunting ex-congressman from Illinois, McClernand considered Post of Arkansas a "boot of the right size." The Century Magazine Dec. 1884.



Figure 36. Rear Admiral David D. Porter. Porter provided amphibious support for the Federal assault on Post of Arkansas. The Century Magazine, April 1885.

readied his forces to defend the post and fired-off a dispatch to General Holmes for last minute instructions. The reply Churchill received was: "hold out till help arrives or until all dead." Churchill planned to carry out his instructions "in spirit and letter."⁴ As the amphibious force drew near, the greyclad soldiers occupied the rifle-pits. Five companies of infantry were advanced as skirmishers, taking position several hundred yards in front of the main line of defense. Churchill posted Captain William Hart and his six gun Arkansas Battery at the edge of the rifle-pits closest to Post Bayou.

On January 9 at 5:00 p.m., transports carrying Sherman's corps pulled into Frederic Notrebe's landing three miles below the Post of Arkansas. The vessels transporting Morgan's corps tied-up nine miles below at Fletcher's Landing.

On the morning of January 10, the Federal infantry moved up to invest the Confederate position. Sherman's corps landed first. Colonel Lionel A. Sheldon's brigade of Osterhaus' Division moved straight up the river road, followed by Smith's and Stuart's divisions. Colonel David W. Lindsey's brigade of Morgan's corps departed Fletcher's Landing and proceeded to Smith's plantation about two miles above the Post of Arkansas. Here the bluecoats wheeled a section of 10-pounder Parrott rifles into position to prevent southern reinforcements from approaching. Colonel J.F. De Courcy's brigade of Morgan's corps was left just above the landing as a reserve unit. Steele's division had orders to head inland from Notrebe's landing, flank the fort and approach from the opposite direction. After floundering in an impenetrable swamp, however, the column retraced its steps. Steele's Division met Morgan's corps at Notrebe's landing and joined the advance.

The vanguard encountered Confederate skirmishers at the first line of rifle-pits. Theirs was only a delaying action, and the Federal infantry soon occupied the entrenchments. With Sheldon's brigade as pivot, each following brigade fanned-out to the right, creating a scythe-like formation that when completed would confront the Confederate rifle-pits protecting the flank of the fort and extending west to Post Bayou.

Meanwhile, McClernand received an erroneous report that all troops were in position. At 5:30 p.m., he conveyed this information to Porter who initiated bombardment of the Confederate fort. Closing within 400 yards of Post of Arkansas, the ironclads Baron de Kalb, Louisville, and Cincinnati opened fire. Porter soon brought up tinclads Lexington and Black Hawk to augment the destructive

shelling. The Confederate gunners gave a good account of themselves, but were no match for the gunboats. When Confederate fire slackened, Porter took advantage of the situation, sending Rattler upriver to enfilade the fort from the opposite side. The unfortunate tinclad became lodged against the piles scarcely 100-yards from the Confederate guns. Before she could disentangle herself, Rattler was raked by Confederate fire. Twilight soon ended the assault. Knowing that an infantry attack would not occur at this late hour, Porter ordered the gunboats to return to their moorings.

By the morning of January 11, the infantry was poised and finally ready to advance. The troops faced the main line of Confederate defense. Union field artillery had been moved into strategic positions. Two 20-pounder Parrott rifles manned by Sheldon's brigade were emplaced only 800 yards from the Post of Arkansas. Lindsey's brigade had shifted two 20-pounder Parrots and two 3-inch rifled guns from Smith's plantation and wheeled them into position on Stillwell's Point opposite the fort. McClernand notified Admiral Porter that all was ready.

At 1 p.m., the navy resumed the bombardment. At the sound of the signal shot, the infantry moved forward. Ironclads Louisville, Baron de Kalb, and Cincinnati joined by tinclads Lexington, Rattler, and Glide steamed up the river and opened fire on the Confederate stronghold. Shelling by the Federal fleet continued relentlessly throughout the afternoon.

The First Wisconsin Battery of Sheldon's brigade opened fire immediately after the signal discharge. The two 20-pounder Parrotts enfiladed the northeast bastion of the fort. The big 9-inch columbiad emplaced there had hampered Porter's efforts the day before. Sheldon's fire was most destructive. After six shots from one of the pieces, the big columbiad fell silent.

By 3 p.m., Sheldon moved his men forward in support of the Chicago Mercantile Battery. Captain Charles G. Cooley of the Mercantile Battery had placed his guns in position behind a rise within 200 yards of the fort. Subjected to a storm of shot and shell, Confederate defenders were quickly driven from the parapet of the fort. Seizing the opportunity to end the battle, Osterhaus ordered the 120th Ohio to storm the fort. With a yell of determination the Buckeyes surged forward only to be pinned down by Confederate fire within pistol shot of the east face of the fort. They remained in this precarious position for the next hour.



Figure 37. The gunboat Baron de Kalb. This craft participated in the battle of the Post of Arkansas. The Century Magazine, Jan. 1885.



Figure 39. Bombardment of Post of Arkansas on January 11, 1863. The Arkansas History Commission.

Small-arms fire cracked up and down the lines as Union infantry advanced toward the rifle pits. Two 10-pounder Parrotts in Hart's Arkansas Battery proved a firm obstacle to the Union advance. Taking cognizance of this threat, Colonel Charles R. Woods of the 76th Ohio deployed sharpshooters, who inched their way into position. Their deadly fire soon drove Hart's gunners from their pieces.

On the Confederate left, Deshler's line held fast. Twice, Union troops were allowed to advance within 100-yards of the entrenchments before being fired upon. Both times the bluecoats fell back with heavy losses. After two more unsuccessful advances, Brigadier General Charles E. Hovey, commanding the Second brigade of Steele's Division, ordered two 12-pounder Napoleans to the front. Confederate rifles were no match for these big guns. After only two rounds had been fired, white flags began appearing along the Confederate line to Deshler's right.

By 4:00 p.m., Union troops had moved within 200 yards of the Confederate line of defense. The big guns in the fort had been silenced. Taking cognizance of this development, Admiral Porter sent two tinclads and the ram Monarch upriver to cut off the Confederate line of retreat. The ironclads began lobbing shells into the rifle pits. By 4:30 p.m., a number of white flags were visible above the Confederate works. Federal troops began crossing over to the enemy lines, disarming the greyclad soldiers. Admiral Porter himself ran the tinclads over to the fort and accompanied by a naval landing party and some infantry, clambered through an open embrasure. For all intents and purposes, the battle of Arkansas Post was won. Confusion still prevailed, however, in the sector defended by Deshler.

Having received no order to do so, Deshler refused to surrender. General Steele advanced to the Confederate line under a flag of truce. The two officers argued for several minutes when from the corner of his eye, Deshler observed that the Union troops had advanced within a pistol shot of his position. The Southern officer shouted at Steele: "If you do not command 'Halt', I will command 'Fire'."⁵ Steele stopped his eager soldiers from advancing and the discussion continued. The stalwart Deshler would not surrender without express orders from the lips of General Churchill. It was not until Churchill personally commanded Deshler to surrender that he allowed the Yankees to cross Confederate breastworks.

The Federal attack on Arkansas Post lasted two days, resulting in a Confederate surrender. Union casualties numbered 134 killed, 898 wounded, and 29 missing. Among the Confederates, 60 were killed, 80 wounded, and 4,800 taken

prisoner. Strategically, McClelland's campaign contributed little to the goal of capturing Vicksburg. He had at least, denied the Confederates continued use of Arkansas Post as a base for their attacks on Union shipping supplying the Mississippi. Major General Ulyses S. Grant was outraged that McClelland had disappeared into the western wilderness with a "Caesar's half" of the army. He further described McClelland's campaign as "a wild goose chase." McClelland was subsequently relegated to a corps commander and his "Army of the Mississippi" dissolved only two weeks after its constitution. The politician-general accepted the demotion poorly and complained to President Lincoln that "my success . . . is gall and wormwood to the clique of West Pointers who have been persecuting me for months."⁶



Figure 40. Federal troops storm Post of Arkansas. The Arkansas History Commission.

CHAPTER 20

DEMISE OF ARKANSAS POST

Arkansas Post never recovered from the ill-effects of war and reconstruction. The Federal assault inflicted irreparable damage on buildings and post residences. Shelling by Union gunboats demolished the former bank building, used by the Confederates as a hospital, "knocking it hither and yon." Reportedly, some houses in the town were torched by "Yankees."

Reconstruction at Arkansas Post was especially difficult. When peace returned to Arkansas in the spring of 1865, properties were extensively damaged, slaves emancipated, and the planters were broke. Crops failed in 1866. Conditions worsened so that by April 1867, the county court ordered that \$5,000 be appropriated to purchase corn for those in need. James H. Lucas, St. Louis banker and former post resident, learned of the plight of the inhabitants and generously shipped \$300 worth of supplies to be billed to his personal account. Many inhabitants, unable to pay taxes, lost their lands. By 1900, Arkansas Post had become a small farming community with less than 100 citizens living a short distance north of the present historic site.¹

During the early part of the twentieth century, Arkansas Post fought yet another battle--the foe, more destructive than McClernand's soldiers, was the Arkansas River. Year after year, successive rises of the river claimed a little more of the friable bank and the history it preserved. By 1880, the site of the confederate fort had entirely disappeared. In 1903, the Arkansas River temporarily changed course one half mile south of Arkansas Post, a change that became permanent in 1912. In 1927, a particularly damaging flood covered the entire site, and the murky waters swallowed many old buildings in the town.

Today, little remains of Arkansas Post--but the site is rich in history. In the early days of colonization, Arkansas Post was the first European settlement in the lower Mississippi Valley and helped establish the claim of France to the greatest waterway on the continent. From Arkansas Post, traders made their way up the Arkansas River and forged alliances with numerous interior Indian tribes. The tiny Arkansas establishment became a center of the Indian trade. As a river port, Arkansas Post provided a midway point for convoys traveling between St. Louis and New Orleans. In this capacity, Arkansas Post played a role in the development of both cities.

Under the control of Spain, Arkansas Post became one link in the Spanish barrier to prevent Anglo-Americans from reaching rich Mexico. The isolationist policy of Spain prompted this nation to aid the Patriots in their effort to gain independence from Britain. With American independence, reasoned Spanish officials, Spain need not fear British aggression. Arkansas Post played an active part in the Revolutionary War drama, both as an intelligence center, and battleground. James Colbert and pro-British partisans attacked Arkansas Post in what was probably the final battle of the conflict. After the Patriots gained independence, Spain confronted a new republic even more aggressive than Britain. Spain attempted to stop the westward advance of the Americans by establishing relationships with Indian tribes between Spanish and American frontiers, and by settling Louisiana with agricultural families. Spanish policy, however, was never tested. Spain entered a transaction with France that inadvertently placed Louisiana in American hands.

As an American community, Arkansas Post participated in the growth and expansion of a nation. The Arkansas River became one avenue of westward expansion and Arkansas Post soon grew into a bustling frontier town. Arkansas Post became the territorial capital of Arkansas from March 2, 1819, to June 1, 1821. By the middle of the nineteenth century, cotton had become the major cash crop of Arkansas, and Arkansas Post a major river port and center of cotton production. But war loomed on the horizon and the decade of the 1860s brought drastic changes to Arkansas Post. Under Confederate occupation, a defensive earthwork was constructed at Arkansas Post to guard the approach to the upriver capital of Little Rock. On January 11, 1863, Arkansas Post fell to Federal troops following a 3-day engagement. The village of Arkansas Post never recovered from the devastation.

CHAPTER 21
ESTABLISHMENT OF ARKANSAS POST NATIONAL MEMORIAL

Although Arkansas Post had largely disappeared, its role in the history of Arkansas was not forgotten. In 1926, Fletcher Chenault, Arkansas Gazette columnist, visited Arkansas Post. Impressed by the significance of the area, Chenault published an article and proposed that the site be developed as a state park. This recommendation was acted on. On February 27, 1929, a bill establishing Arkansas Post as a unit of the State Park System was signed into law.

The park began with 20 acres donated by Fred Quandt. In the following years, additional acreage was acquired and numerous improvements made with the support of Works Progress Administration labor. On March 26, 1959, Arkansas Congressman William F. Norrell introduced a bill to establish Arkansas Post as a unit of the National Park System. On July 6, 1960, President Dwight D. Eisenhower signed into law, legislation authorizing creation of Arkansas Post National Memorial.

Arkansas Post National Memorial is administered by the National Park Service, United States Department of the Interior. The park contains 304.6 acres of land encompassing the sites of three colonial forts, Confederate Post of Arkansas, and the Franco-Spanish-American village that became the territorial capital of Arkansas. A modern visitor center and museum interpret the Arkansas Post story.

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APPENDIX 1

COMMANDANTS OF ARKANSAS POST

FRENCH

Lt. La Boulaye
(Sept. 20 1721-March 1725)

1st Ens. De Coulange
(1731-1734)

1st Ens. Jean Ste. Therese de Langloiserie
(1734-1739)

Lt. Jean Francois Tisserant de Montcharvaux
(1739-1748)

1st Ens. Louis Xavier Martin Delino de Chalmette
(1748-1751)

Lt. Paul Augustin le Pelletier de la Houssaye
(1751-1753)

Capt. De Reggio
(1753-1757)

Capt. De Gamon de la Rochette
(1757-1763)

1st Ens. De Brichet
(1763)

Capt. Pierre Marie Cabaret de Trep
(Sept. 27 1763-Spring 1764)

Ens. Le Gros de Grandcour
(Spring 1764-1766)

SPANISH

Ens. Le Gros de Grandcour
(1766-Feb. 1768)

Capt. Alexandre de Clouet
(Feb. 1768-Dec. 13 1769)

Capt. Francois de Maselliere
(Dec. 13 1769-Dec 10 1770)

Lt. Josef Orieta
(Dec. 10 1770-April 29 1771)

Capt. Fernando de Leyba
(April 29 1771-April 18 1774)

Capt. Josef Orieta
(April 18 1774-June 16 1776)

Sgt. Lucas Garcia
(June 16 1776-Sept. 7 1776)

Capt. Balthazar de Villiers
(Sept. 7 1776-June 19 1782)

Lt. Luis de Villars
(June 19 1782-Jan. 7 1783)

Capt. Jacobo Dubreuil Saint-Cyr
(Jan. 7 1783-March 1787)

Capt. Josef Valliere
(March 1787-July 1790)

Capt. Juan Ignace Delino de Chalmette
(July 1790-July 11 1794)

Capt. Carlos de Villemont
(July 11 1794-Summer 1802)

Capt. Francisco Caso y Luengo
(Summer 1802-March 23 1804)

AMERICAN

Lt. James B. Many
(March 23 1804-March 1805)

Lt. Stephen Worrel
(March 1805-June(?) 1805)

Lt. Robert Weir Osborn
(June(?) 1805-(?))

Capt. George Armistead
((?)-Nov. 15 1808)

APPENDIX 2

DESCRIPTIONS AND LOCATIONS OF ARKANSAS POST

During the 118 years that France and Spain maintained a presence on the Arkansas River, their posts occupied several locations. To service river traffic on the Mississippi, proximity to the mouth of the Arkansas was essential. Few sites within 30 miles of the mouth of the river, however, were high enough to escape inundation during the devastating floods that occurred frequently along the lower Arkansas. Furthermore, defense of the post depended on the presence of the Quapaw Indians who often relocated their villages. As a result, the post was moved and rebuilt several times.

The different locations of Arkansas Post have been the subject of much controversy. Historians have rarely agreed on the number of posts represented, the dates constructed, or the locations they have occupied. Fortunately for the present study, two recent works have clarified this issue. First, one location of Arkansas Post has been verified in the field by University of Arkansas archeologist Burney B. McClurkan.¹ Second, historian Morris S. Arnold has diligently researched original documents that support the existence of seven posts in three different geographic locations.² The following discussion blends elements of both studies with descriptions of the different Arkansas Posts.

Figure 41. The three locations of Arkansas Post. After Morris S. Arnold, "The relocation of Arkansas Post to Ecores Rouges in 1779," In Arkansas Historical Quarterly, 42 (Winter 1983), 323. Seven different French and Spanish forts have existed along the lower Arkansas River, in three basic geographic locations.

Location:	Date of Occupation:	
1	1686-1696	Post 1
	1721-1726	Post 2
	1732-1751	Post 3
2	1751-1756	Post 4
	1779-1792	Post 6
	1792-1812	Post 7
3	1756-1779	Post 5



POST #1 (1686-1698)

In 1686, Henri de Tonti left six men on the Arkansas River to build a trading house and open commerce with the Quapaw Indians. The first recorded description of this post comes from Henri Joutel who arrived on the Arkansas in July, 1687, with the survivors of La Salle's last expedition.

Being come to a river [Arkansas] that was between us and the village, and looking over to the further side we discovered a great cross, and at a small distance from it a house built after the French fashion.³

It is seated on a small eminency, half a musket-shot from the village [Assotoue], [with] plains lying on one side of it.⁴

Joutel reveals that the post was on the north bank of the Arkansas River adjacent to the Quapaw village of Assotoue.⁵ Further locational information is provided by De Tonti who visited the post for the first time in January, 1690. The location of my "commercial house," commented De Tonti, was at the village of Assotoue who "lived on a branch of the river [Arkansas] coming from the west," nine miles from the mouth of the river.⁶

The first post on the Arkansas was probably abandoned in 1698 following De Tonti's presence on the river to enforce the royal edict forbidding the trapping of furs south of Canada. By 1700, De Tonti's former factor led a party of English to the mouth of the Arkansas to trade with the Quapaw.⁷

Historian Stanley Faye has stated that the location of De Tonti's post was on the bank of Lake Dumond, a former channel of the Arkansas River. Partial support for this location is the presence of a nearby Quapaw village site, that archeologists concede may be the location of Assotoue.⁸

POST #2 (1721-1726)

On March 1, 1722, French explorer Benard de La Harpe arrived on the Arkansas River and found Lieutenant La Boulaye and Second Lieutenant De Francome living at the Quapaw village of "Zautoouys." Initially, La Boulaye had occupied a site at the village of "Ouyapes" on the Mississippi River, but because of flooding, the garrison moved one month later. A single soldier, Saint Dominique, remained at Ouyapes to await the arrival of trade goods for the warehouse the French maintained there.⁹ The remainder of the garrison, at the time of La Harpe's inspection, had

been sent to cultivate fields at the Law colony where they had permission to become inhabitants.¹⁰

Apparently, "Zautoouys" is merely a different spelling of "Assoutoue." Information indicates, however, that the Quapaw village had been relocated south of the Arkansas River since Joutel's 1687 description. A map prepared by Lt. Jean Benjamin Francois Dumont, scientist for La Harpe's expedition, clearly indicates that Zautoouys was south of the Arkansas River, the post immediately north of the river, and the Law colony a greater distance northeast of the garrison.¹¹ Dumont further attests to the continuity of La Boulaye's post and De Tonti's original 1686 location.¹² Of the post, Dumont remarked:

There is no fort in the place, only four or five palisaded houses, a guardhouse and a cabin which serves as a storehouse.¹³

La Harpe indicated that the Law colony was situated approximately three miles west by northwest of the post and that the expedition crossed a small stream to get there. The site of the concession was a "beautiful plain surrounded by fertile valleys and a little stream of fine clear wholesome water."¹⁴ La Harpe found:

about forty-seven persons including Mr. Menard, Commander, and Labro [his son the magazine guard], a surgeon, and an apothecary.

Their works still consist of only a score of cabins poorly arranged and three acres of cleared ground.¹⁵

Sometime between La Harpe's departure from and return to the concession on April 28, the majority of colonists had abandoned the post. Deron de Artaquette, a company official, visited the concession one year later and observed the faltering colony:

there were only three miserable huts, fourteen Frenchmen and six negroes whom Sr. Dufresne, who is the director there for the company employs in clearing the land.¹⁶

Visiting the garrison later in the day, De Artaquette observed that the post contained only a hut for Commandant La Boulaye and a barn, that served as lodging for the soldiers stationed there.

Following dissolution of the concession, a garrison remained on the Arkansas until 1726. In that year, the Jesuits assumed responsibility for preserving the French

alliance with the Quapaw, and Father Paul du Poisson traveled to the Arkansas. Apparently, the concession had been vacated since Du Poisson commented:

I was lodged in the house of the Company of Indies--which is the house of the commander when there is one here.¹⁷

Following the death of Du Poisson in 1728, the Arkansas was evidently abandoned.¹⁸

It is apparent from the previous discussion that three European landmarks were present on the Arkansas from 1721-1728:

- 1) A factory or warehouse at the Quapaw village of Ouyapes on the Mississippi;
- 2) A French garrison that occupied a site on the north bank of the Arkansas across from the Quapaw village of Assotoue/Zautoouys. The location of the garrison was apparently the same as that occupied by De Tonti's 1686 post and;
- 3) The Law colony that was about one league or three miles from the post. Depending upon which account is used, the colony was either northeast or west by northwest of the post.

POST #3 (1732-1751)

Lieutenant Coulange and 12 men came to the Arkansas in 1732 and selected a site on the north bank about 12 miles from the mouth of the river. One account suggests that Coulange occupied the same site as had La Boulaye and De Tonti before him.¹⁹ By 1734, the works constructed were described as:

a wooden house on sleepers thirty-two feet long by eighteen feet wide, roofed with bark, consisting of three rooms on the ground floor, one of which has a fireplace, the floors and ceilings of cyprus, a powder magazine built of wood on sleepers ten feet long and eight feet wide, a prison built of posts driven into the ground, roofed with bark, ten feet long by eight feet wide, and a building which serves as a barracks, also of posts driven into the ground forty feet long by sixteen feet wide, roofed with bark.²⁰

Father Vitry recorded this description in 1738:

The fort is small; a larger one [is] not needed for the twelve men who are there commanded by an officer. A

few Frenchmen attracted by the hope of trade with the Indians are settled nearby.

The missionary is a Jesuit [Father Avond]. The lodging of the father is a makeshift hut; the walls are made of split log, the roof of cyprus bark, and the chimney of mud, mixed with dry grass which is the straw of the country. I have lived elsewhere in such dwellings but nowhere did I have so much fresh air. The house is full of cracks from top to bottom.²¹

In 1751, Captain De La Houssaye assumed command of the post. Since the habitant village had been attacked by Chickasaw Indians two years earlier, La Houssaye moved the post to a more easily defended location.²²

POST #4 (1751-1756)

According to La Houssaye, the site selected for the new post was on the north bank of the Arkansas about forty-five miles above the mouth of the river.²³ This site is within the boundaries of the present Arkansas Post National Memorial. Apparently, construction of the post was initiated in October, 1751, but may not have been completed until 1755. A description and valuation of the post reveals that on completion, the fort was enclosed by an 11-foot high wall of double stakes, 720 feet in length. Platforms for cannon batteries were set in the angles formed by three bastions. Inside the fort, a number of buildings were constructed including a commanding officer's quarter, barracks, an oven, magazine, and latrines. Another building contained rooms of the storekeeper and interpreter, and housed the hospital and storehouse. A prison was constructed beneath a cannon platform in one of the bastions. Ultimately this location proved to be too inaccessible for boat traffic on the Mississippi River. As a result, the post was moved in 1756.²⁴

POST #5 (1756-1779)

A 1766 account found the fort located:

a few miles from the mouth of the river [Arkansas], [opposite which is an island 15 miles long] in the neighborhood of the Indian village.²⁵

Shortly before Spain assumed control of Louisiana, British Captain Philip Pittman made an inspection of French forts and settlements throughout the province. Of Arkansas Post, Pittman said:

the fort is situated three leagues [nine miles] up the river Arkansas, and is built with stockades in a quadrangular form. The sides of the exterior polygon are about 180 feet, and one 3-pounder is mounted in the flanks and faces of each bastion. The buildings within the fort are: a barracks with three rooms for soldiers, commanding officer's house, a powder magazine for provisions, and an apartment for the commissary, all of which are in ruinous condition. The fort stands about 200 yards from the waterside, and is garrisoned by a captain, a lieutenant, and French soldiers, including sergeants and corporals. There are eight houses without the fort occupied by as many families, who have cleared the land about 900 yards in depth.²⁶

In 1776, Captain Balthasar de Villiers assumed command of the post. In 1778, a particularly damaging flood, a problem that plagued the post since its removal in 1756, prompted De Villiers to request a change in location. De Villiers favored two former post sites: the bank of Lake Dumond and Ecores Rouges or Red Bluffs. When it was learned that the river had separated from the former site at Lake Dumond, however, De Villiers requested that the post be relocated at Ecores Rouges. It was reasoned that this location was more easily defended and, being above the forks where the White River entered the Arkansas, would be more effective in keeping British hunters out of the district. Furthermore, De Villiers believed that river traffic had slowed so much by 1777 that a site near the Mississippi was no longer a necessity. The request cleared official channels, and the post was relocated in 1779.²⁷

In 1882, Dr. Edward Palmer identified the site of Arkansas Post (1756-1779). In 1971, University of Arkansas archeologist Burney B. McClurkan rediscovered this location. Unfortunately, before an in-depth investigation could be undertaken, the Arkansas River overflowed its banks, as it had so many times before, destroying most if not all of the site.²⁸

POST #6 (1779-1792)

On March 16, 1779, Commandant Balthazar de Villiers reported that the move to Ecores Rouges or Red Bluffs had been accomplished. The site of the new settlement he described as three hills adjacent to the river. On the first hill ascending the river, some Quapaw Indians had already settled. On the second hill, De Villiers located a number of Anglo-American refugee families, and on the third hill he placed the Franco-Spanish families and projected a fort. Construction of the fort progressed slowly. By July,

1781, the fort was finally completed. De Villiers described the finished work:

It is made of red oak stakes thirteen feet high, with diameters of 10 to 15 or 16 inches split in two and reinforced by similar stockades to a height of six feet and a banquette of two feet. Thus, I have built a reinforced stockade around all the necessary places, including a house 45 feet long and 15 feet wide, and a storehouse, both serving to lodge my troops, and around several smaller buildings, all of them built at my own expense when I arrived here. The openings for the cannon and swivel guns are covered with sliding panels which are bullet-proof.²⁹

De Villiers first used the title "Fort Carlos III," to refer to this post in a letter of December 24, 1779, to Governor Jose Galvez.³⁰

In 1787, four rises of the river had badly eroded the bank under Fort Carlos III. By the end of the year, only 18 inches of overhanging esplanade remained, forcing Commandant Valliere to remove the artillery. In February, 1788, another rise of the river tore away a bastion and by March the stockade wall nearest the river slipped down the bank. By the end of the year, little remained of Fort Carlos III, and the garrison was forced to quarter beyond the ruined enclosure. In spite of Valliere's frequent complaints to the governor, a lack of funds delayed construction for almost two years. On July 20, 1790, Captain Ignace Delino de Chalmette assumed command of the garrison. Shortly afterward, the citizens of the post presented him with a memorial soliciting a new fort through which they offered to supply stakes for a stockade. De Chalmette purveyed this most recent request to the governor and on January 20, 1791, permission to rebuild the fort was granted.³¹

POST #7 (1792-1812)

After receiving permission to rebuild the fort, Commandant De Chalmette selected a new location next to the habitant's fields within a cannon shot of the village. On March 1, 1792, De Chalmette took possession of the new fort and named it San Esteban after the governor's given name.³²

In February, 1793, the commander of the Spanish ship, La Fleche, described Fort San Esteban:

the fort of Arkansas is situated in the middle of a hill that overlooks the Arkansas River. The fort is surrounded by round stakes of white oak protected

against carbine shots. It has a bastion on the east and another on the west in which are mounted a cannon of four and two swivel guns. In the fort there is a house, barracks, and a ware house covered with shingles. Above the fort there are about thirty houses, with galleries around covered with shingles, which form two streets. Below the fort there are about a dozen quite pretty plots of four by four arpents [44x44 feet], where there are very beautiful fields.³³

In 1796 French General Victor Collot, far less impressed than the commander of La Fleche had been, described the fort as:

two ill-constructed huts, situated on the left, at a distance of seventy-five miles from the river of Arkansas, surrounded with great palisades, without a ditch or parapet, and containing four six-pounders, bear the name of fort.³⁴

On July 22, 1802, Commandant Carlos de Villemont transferred possession of the post to Captain Francisco Caso y Luengo. The inventory made at the time of this transfer listed the buildings and artillery of the fort in good condition. In 1803, the United States purchased Louisiana from Napoleon Bonaparte, emperor of France. In January, 1802, Marques de Casa Calvo, in charge of the Spanish evacuation, ordered Caso y Luengo to transfer the post to United States representative James B. Many. As with any change of command, both men prepared an inventory of the fort, dated March 23, 1804, that listed the following structures and their condition:

- One barrack 50 feet long by 10 feet wide, covered with shingles, flanked on top with a double clay chimney and at the end a division which is used as a prison.
- A kitchen for the commandant 20 feet long by 12 feet broad covered with shingles with a division for the war supplies. It is in a poor condition throughout.
- An earthen oven near the fort in normal condition.
- Three sentry boxes in poor condition.
- One flag staff in good condition. The locks, keys, hinges, latches, respectively, for each building in normal order.³⁵

American captain George B. Armistead regarrisoned the post with 16 American troops.³⁶ Fort San Esteban, thereafter known as Fort Madison, maintained a garrison until the outbreak of the War of 1812.³⁷ Apparently, remnants of Fort Madison were visible in 1819 when William Woodruff visited the site and found that "no fort was standing, but there were some palisades." A somewhat

contradictory observation was made by Daniel T. Witter in the same year:

I in the company with several gentlemen, went out to look at the old fort. Gov. Miller was one of the party. We found a large unfinished building, built of hewn logs and intended as a sort of block house. It had the appearance of not having been built long before that date and I learned from Gen. Allen, who was one of the party, that U.S. troops had been stationed there not long before, under the command of Major Armistead. I saw no walls or breastworks and presume it was intended for what in military parlance [sic.] is called "Cantonment." There were no troops there at that time and probably had not been for some 3 or 4 years.³⁸

During preliminary test excavations at Arkansas Post, National Park Service archeologist Preston Holder identified what he believed was the stockade of Fort Carlos III or Fort San Esteban. Holder's conclusion was based on limited evidence and has since been refuted by William A. Westbury, Southern Methodist University archeologist.³⁹ It is evident from historical documentation that Fort Carlos III was undermined by the river, and historian Edwin C. Bearss has suggested the same fate for Fort San Esteban/Madison.⁴⁰

ENDNOTES FOR APPENDIX 2

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3 Ray H. Mattison, "Report on the Historical Investigations of Arkansas Post, Arkansas" (Typed manuscript on file at Arkansas Post National Memorial, 1957), p. 74.

4 Ibid., p. 78.

5 Ibid.

6 Henri de Tonty, "Memoir Sent in 1693, on the Discovery of the Mississippi and the Neighboring Nations by M. De La Salle from the Year 1678 to the Time of his Death, and by the Sieur De Tonty to the Year 1691," p. 98, In Thomas Falconer, On the Discovery of the Mississippi and on the South-Western, Oregon, and North-Western Boundary of the United States (Austin, Tx.: Shoal Creek Publishers, 1975).

7 Norman W. Caldwell, "Tonty and the Beginning of Arkansas Post," Arkansas Historical Quarterly, 8 (Autumn 1949), 195, 201.

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9 Ralph A. Smith, "Exploration of the Arkansas River by Benard De La Harpe, 1721-1722," Arkansas Historical Quarterly, 10 (Winter 1951), 342.

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- 16 Mattison, pp. 17-18.
- 17 Ibid.
- 18 Ibid., p. 22.
- 19 Arnold, "Relocation of Arkansas Post," p. 4.
- 20 Mattison, p. 22.
- 21 Ibid.
- 22 W. David Baird, The Quapaw Indians, a History of the Downstream People (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1980), p. 34.
- 23 Faye, p. 634. Mattison, p. 85.
- 24 Mattison, pp. 99-113. Arnold, p. 322, n. 3.
- 25 Mattison, p. 88.
- 26 Ibid., p. 33.
- 27 Arnold, pp. 320-21.
- 28 McClurkan, pp. 32-39.
- 29 William A. Westbury, Archeological Assessment, Arkansas Post National Memorial (Dallas: Southern Methodist University Archeology Program, 1976).
- 30 Gilbert C. Din, "Spanish Fort on the Arkansas, 1763-1803," Arkansas Historical Quarterly, 42 (Autumn 1983), 5.
- 31 Ibid., pp. 283-84.
- 32 Ibid.
- 33 Mattison, p. 96.
- 34 Ibid., p. 97.
- 35 Ibid., p. 126.

36 Edwin C. Bearss and Lenard E. Brown, Arkansas Post National Memorial: Structural History, Post of Arkansas, 1804-1862, and Civil War Troop Movement Maps, January 1863 (Washington D.C., Department of the Interior, National Park Service 1971) p. 18.

37 Baird, pp. 51-53.

38 Bearss and Brown, p. 18.

39 Westbury, p. 51.

40 Edwin C. Bearss, Chief Historian, National Park Service. Personal communication.

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